

## Small Group Guide - 4/24/22

### Acts 6:1–7 - Problems and Priorities in the Church

#### **Sermon Outline / Notes**

- \*Gamaliel's Advice Heeded! Church continues to grow - "these days"
- \*Chapters 6–9 deal with Stephen, Philip, and Paul - all three to be introduced shortly
- \*Chapters 1–2 deal with Jesus going up and the Spirit coming down; 2:42–5:42 deal with the church going out in Jerusalem. Chapter 6 begins the church going out beyond Jerusalem.
- \*Church had experienced prayer/Pentecost/prosperity/persecution together; now problems.
- \*Satan had brought persecution from outside and sin from inside; now possible distraction.

#### **1. The Problem: Neglecting Hellenist Widows (6:1)**

- \*Hellenists: Greek-speaking Jews from outside Palenstine ("Greek Jews")
- \*Hebrews: Aramaic-speaking Jews from Palenstine ("Jewish Jews")
- \*The Hellenists widows were mistakenly overlooked in daily food distribution.
- \*This problem potentially could tear down Gospel unity in the church.

**Truth: Problems will always be a reality in the church; how we respond to problems determines what type of church we will be.**

#### **2. The Solution: Prioritize Ministry & Select Servants (6:2-4)**

- \*Summon the church - problem affects whole church; discussed w/ whole church
- \*State the priority of preaching and prayer - no supermen, must fulfill their calling
- \*Select spiritual men to serve
  - "Pick out" means, "to inspect; to look at accurately or diligently with the meaning to look for, seek out, as persons for office; to choose or select on the basis of having investigated carefully" - **SAME WORD IN JS. 1:27**

**Truth: The church is called to many ministries, but we must never be distracted from prioritizing the Gospel, the Word, and prayer above all.**

#### **3. The Church Takes Action (6:5–6)**

- \*They were pleased with the apostles' plan and selected seven spiritual men.
- \*The apostles appointed these men for the ministry of food distribution.

**Truth: Ministry from the church requires spiritual people in the church to select and serve.**

\*\*\*Aside: Were these the first deacons?

- \*While they function in serving, they are never called deacons.
- \*"Deacon" does not appear in Acts but later in Philippians and 1 Timothy.
- \*Their ministry ended with the persecution of Acts 8:1.
- \*It is best to view these men as prototypes of the future office of "deacon."

#### **4. The Result: Christ continued to bless and build His church. (6:7)**

- \*The Word grew in the fertile soil of hearts.
- \*More people were saved and disciplined.
- \*Priests believed and followed Jesus the Messiah.

**Truth: Obeying Jesus in the church brings His blessing upon the church.**

#### **Small Group Questions**

1. What spoke to you from the Bible passage and sermon Sunday morning?
2. Who were the Hellenists and the Hebrews, and what were the differences among them? What was the Hebrews' general perception of Hellenists? How was the problem of neglecting Hellenist widows a potential cause for schism and division in the church?
3. How did the apostles respond? Why did they summon the whole church? What was their priority of ministry? Why is preaching and prayer the most vital ministry of the church? Discuss the apostles' priority and how the church can become distracted by "good ministry" that doesn't communicate the Gospel.
4. How did the church respond to the apostles' solution? Why were qualifications needed for these servants? Does the church generally today look for spiritual people to do spiritual ministry?
5. How should we view these seven men? Should they be labeled the first deacons?
6. What was the Lord's response to the church's response to problems? Discuss the three blessings the Lord brought in Acts 6:7. What is the relationship with obedience and blessing? How do we avoid viewing our obedience as earning blessing from God but realize it is all of His grace?