

## A New Challenge Acts 6

Acts 6 is a story of how the Church was threatened and what it did to overcome this threat. In Acts 5, we saw a threat coming from the outside. In Acts 6, we have a threat that comes from the inside. We should be very interested in this passage because we can easily go to the same place.

In Acts 6 we encounter one of those moments when our sin nature and our pathetic little enemy the devil seem to conspire together to distract us from the mission. For just a moment, the Church stumbled and Satan's plan to divide and conquer almost took hold.

There were two groups of people in line to receive care from the Church:  
Hebraic Jewish Christians are those whose language and culture are centered in Israel.  
Hellenistic Jewish Christians are those whose language and culture are derived from Greece.

Whenever you have us *and* them in the Church, it won't be long before you have us *against* them. Conflict in the Church is inevitable. Why? Because people comprise the Church.

How you respond to conflict is often more significant than the existence of the conflict.  
How you respond to problems often says more about you than the existence of a problem.

Consider this:

Revelation 5 and 7 speak of every tribe, language, people and nation  
Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek ... you are all one in Christ

*Point of contact with the gospel:* Jesus Christ died on a cross to purchase the very unity they are denying. (This is why Acts 6 matters so much.)

Perhaps you take the time to read Ephesians 2:11-20  
God is the great reconciler of people to Himself AND to each other.

This passage also describes another way in which the Church protected its unity and the mission to proclaim the gospel and make disciples. *Different groups* of people are recognized and affirmed. *Different gifts* that people bring to ministry are also recognized and affirmed.

Notice the following statements from Acts 6...

*"It would not be right for us to give up preaching."  
"We will devote ourselves to prayer and the preaching ministry."  
"So the preaching about God flourished."*

Here's the gospel in 4 words based on John 3:16 ...

God - People - Jesus - Response

### **Home Group Discussion Questions:**

1. For those of you who don't meet every week, here's a question from last week's message:  
*Since we Christians might receive pushback or even hostility for our faith, discuss in your group the key components of the gospel. What is the most offensive piece of the gospel?*
2. How would you feel if you were placed in a Home Group that was comprised of Christians with whom you had no natural connection? (Different age, different place in life, different worldview)
3. Did you notice that the daily distribution issue had two layers – the actual distribution of food AND the assertion of preferential treatment based on ethnicity? There are always things that a particular Church does wrong. Let's focus on what went right in this situation.
  - What was right about the response of the Church leaders?
  - What was right about the response of the Church people?
  - This specific issue never comes up again in the Book of Acts although they will stumble when it comes to Samaritans and Gentiles coming to Christ. Brainstorm some reasons why this solution was effective.
4. Did the early Church leaders make a good decision in terms of staying committed to the preaching of God's Word? Suppose they had not made this decision to stay focused on the preaching of God's Word – what do you think might have happened?
5. You may have heard Pastor Karl say this: *Some of the very same people who put the Son of God on a cross came to God seeking forgiveness and it was given to them freely.*  
How does that affect you?

### **Family Discipleship:**

Read Acts 6:1-7 as a family and discuss the following questions ....

1. What are some ways we can encourage those who teach, lead or preach in the Church?
2. How should you treat people? How do you treat people who are different than you?
3. What are some things we can pray about for our Church?