

CHANGES IN THE CHURCH

Acts 6:1-7



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In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

- **By nature, churches are resistant to changes**
 - changes affect our culture**
 - changes affect what is foundational in our lives**
- **But missing out on possible changes can halt a church's effectiveness**
- **God remains the same, but his methodology changes all the time**



Changes come by obedience to the Holy Spirit

They Chose to Recognize Potential Consequences (v.1)

- The Hellenistic Jews

Greek-speaking Jews

who had returned to Jerusalem

- Hebraic Jews

Aramaic-speaking Jews

who had always lived in Jerusalem

- The Hellenistic widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.



- The type of crisis on their hands

social

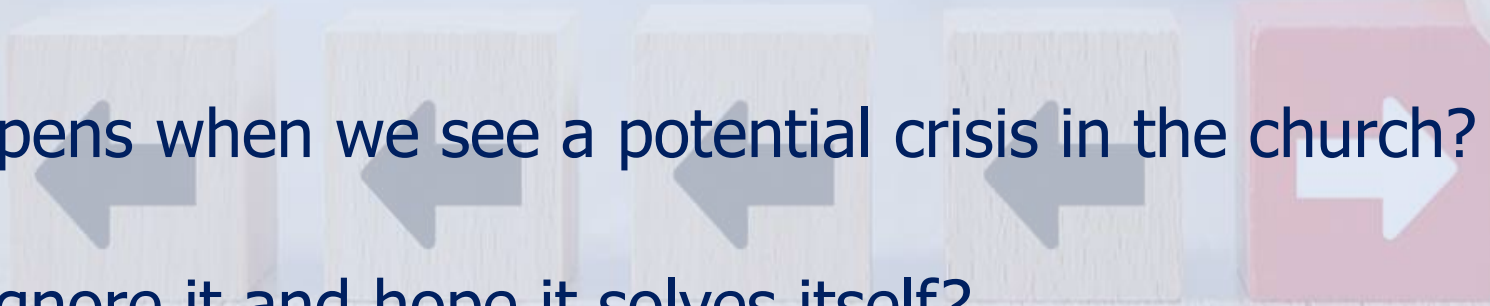
cultural

- It had the potential to disrupt the unity of the early church.

- What happens when we see a potential crisis in the church?

Do we ignore it and hope it solves itself?

Or, do we seek after God for a solution?



They Chose Those Who Were Spiritually Qualified (vs.2-4)

- It sounds like the Twelve were being irresponsible and passing the buck.
- But, actually, what they did was very wise

the ministry of the word of God is what Jesus appointed them to do

They empowered the other disciples to address the issue

- The instructions were to choose seven men from among them who were known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

- What criteria do we use to select people to do ministry?

let's find someone who isn't doing anything

let's find a new person in the church

- Qualifications to do English-speaking ministry.

- Why is it important to find people who are spiritually qualified?

You're not just trying to preserve a culture

You are participating in building the kingdom of God



They Chose Leaders From the Greek Community (vs.5-8)

- The names of the seven men chosen are all Greek, meaning that they were all from the Hellenistic community
- The Hebraic leaders were not afraid to share leadership with those from the diaspora.
- The apostles indicated their approval by praying and laying hands on them, i.e., an act of commissioning
- Some of these men went on to play significant roles in the early church

Stephen becomes the first martyr

Philip ministers to the Ethiopian eunuch

- The aftermath is that the word of God spread
the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased
a number of priests became obedient to the faith.

- Why is it best for leaders to come from the community that you want to reach?

Is it about preserving a culture?

It's about having someone who knows the people and knows how to reach them



Churches need to seek God's wisdom on how he moves today

Changes that today's church needs to consider

- Today's generation cares about who is sitting next to them, not just who is standing in front of them
- Today's generation values community, not just program
- Today's generation values caring, not just theology
- Today's generation values authenticity, not just morality