Crossroads International Church Singapore Dr. Rick Griffith

7 March 2021 Message 6 of 23

NLT 30 Minutes

Title

**Problem Solved—By YOU!**

***Acts 6:1-7***

**Topic:** Leadership

**Subject:** How should we solve the growth issues we face?

Subject

Oppose & Response

Apostles Rejoice

Series

External

Internal

Internal

Heart

**Complement:** The solution to church growth problems is more lay leaders.

**Purpose:** The listeners will join at least one ministry to help solve our church growth issues.

**Attribute:** The God Who Involves Us

**Meditation:** Hebrews 13:21—"May he equip you with all you need for doing his will.”

**Reading:** Acts 6:1-7

**Benediction:** Hebrews 13:21—"May he equip you with all you need for doing his will.”

**Songs:** O Church Arise, The Church’s One Foundation, We are the Body of Christ

# Introduction

### Interest: Internal issues can hinder our growth.

#### My heart problems could thwart Jordan expansion.

Internal Hinder

#### Our recent church growth could hinder our ministry.

CIC

Growth

### Need: What should we do as a church to accommodate growth?

Problems

#### We already expanded to two services.

#### We continue the online ministry.

#### But we still haven’t restated Man2Man, youth, and young adult ministries.

#### Plus our ladies Bible studies are too large for two gatherings as we need four now!

### Subject: How should we solve the growth issues we face?

### Background: Our study in Acts is in week 6 and we’ve seen how the Spirit caused growth.

#### The account in Acts has alternated between external and internal threats to the newly formed Church—but the Spirit overcame them all.

#### External threats helped the church grow in trusting God.

##### Acts 5 ends showing how the external threat of the Jewish leaders imprisoning and harming the apostles.

##### But it led to the opposite effect that they wanted—growth!

#### Internal threats purged the church from sin, also leading to growth.

### Preview: Today let’s see how the early church solved an internal issue related to growth.

### Text: Acts 6 continues the account with an internal issue related to growth.

(So what was the problem in Acts 6?)

# I. [The apostles solved a food problem caused growth by designating lay leaders (6:1-7).]

Growth

1a

## The blessing of God on the Jerusalem church caused it to grow (1a).

Tree

### We don’t see a focus on church growth as much as church health, as Rick Warren notes.

Throw Money

Lay Leaders

The Word

Greek & Hebrew

4:32-37

Languages

### The initial 3000 who trusted Christ at Pentecost (Acts 2) grew to 5000 (Acts 5), and God added others daily even to this number.

Graph

## But the growing church had a food distribution problem (1b).

Widows

1b

4:32-37

### Money was given to take care of those in need (4:32-37).

Greek & Hebrew

### However, Hebrew-speaking widows got more food than Greek-speaking widows.

#### The Roman Empire adopted the Greek language of those the Romans conquered. But the local language in Jerusalem was still largely Aramaic or Hebrew. So which language would win in the event of a disagreement?

Languages

##### Singapore faced this issue in the 1950s as the British influence waned. Would the country adopt English or Chinese or Malay?

##### Sri Lanka also faced the language issue in the 1970s and 1980s. English or Sinhala or Tamil?

#### Widows faced difficulties in biblical times that few can identify with today. There was no society safety net where people saved up for retirement. As a result, few widows still had money after their husbands died.

##### Thus, their children supported them, as 1 Timothy 5:8 commands.

##### But what if the children died before their parents? Here the church stepped in to help support such widows over age 60 with a good reputation.

#### How did food distribution to Greek-speaking widows become a problem (6:1b)?

##### People typically do not learn new languages in their retirement years. We can assume that these widows were older, so if they spoke Hebrew all their life, they had an advantage to argue their case in Jerusalem.

##### While Greek-speaking Jewish widows spoke the international trade language, they were at a disadvantage in Jerusalem as most people spoke Hebrew.

Cartoon

An Idea

## The apostles solved the growth problem by appointing lay leaders (2-7).

### The apostles proposed a plan to choose lay leaders (2-4).

6:2-7

#### The apostles from Galilee called a public meeting of the locals (2a).

Word

#### They shared their priority of teaching over administration (2b).

##### Actually, the Greek simply says they were committed to the “word”—not “teaching” (NLT) or “preaching” (ESV).

##### Why did the apostles conclude that their calling was teaching and prayer (2, 4)?

###### Teaching is the most demanding ministry in the church.

###### Prayer is probably the most difficult thing we do.

Why Men?

#### They asked the locals to choose seven respected administrators (3a).

##### Why did the church choose men instead of women to run the food program (3a)?

The

Seven

Happy Widows

Chart

• Greek names

Progress Report

The Result

Word & Prayer

Spirit-Filled

3

###### This was likely administration and carrying heavy loads rather than cooking.

###### Most online food deliveries are done by men! Few women want to climb up flights of stairs to our walk-up apartment!

##### Why did the church choose seven men instead of some other number (3b)?

The

Seven

###### This is the perfect number, so this would be the perfect food program!

###### Just kidding. We don’t really know why seven was best.

Spirit-Filled

##### Why these qualifications instead of administrative ability (3c)?

###### The men handled a lot of money, so they needed already to be respected, Spirit-filled, and wise.

###### This underscores how character trumps ability.

Word & Prayer

#### They committed in advance to appoint those selected (3b).

#### The reaffirmed their commitment to teaching and prayer (4).

### The church followed the plan (5-6).

#### Everyone liked the idea (5a).

• Greek

#### They chose seven Greek-speakers to lead the food issues (5b).

##### Why give the exact names of these men chosen (5)?

###### The problem related to discrimination against Greek speakers, so it be little help to appoint men who only spoke Hebrew.

###### All seven men had Greek names. In fact, Nicolas of Antioch was a Greek who previously converted to Judaism.

##### Note that the apostles were not from Jerusalem, so they let the locals make this decision from among the 5000+ people.

#### The apostles appointed “The Seven” to the task (6).

Result

### God blessed the result (7).

#### God’s word continued to spread (7a).

Growth

#### The Jerusalem church grew instead of splitting (7b).

Progress Reports

#### Many Jewish priests trusted Christ (7c).

Happy Widows

#### Why is this passage important to Luke to share (7)?

##### Internal issues can lead to splits—there was a potential of a Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking church out of this.

##### Instead, the result was that God blessed the word that they protected. Both common people and priests “became obedient to the faith” (ESV).

Subject

 (So what is the main principle here?)

Applied

Dever Quote

Subj

What to Do?

Probs & Solutions

CIC

Growth

Lessons

So what?

# II. The solution to church growth problems is more lay leaders (MI).

MI

[More ministry heads help sustain the increase.]

## The worldly solution is to put more work on less people.

Worldly

### Have any experienced such a strategy at work?

### The company grows, but the workforce shrinks!

## God’s solution is more leaders to spread the blessing to more people.

So What?

(And how does this passage relate specifically to us?)

Apply

# III. We must appoint more leaders to handle our growth (MI Applied).

[Let’s designate ministry heads to sustain the increase.]

Truth

## We will continue to seek truth—not growth.

Probs & Solutions

## But we need more leaders of ministries.

Subj

(We began with this issue: How should we solve the growth issues we face? What’s the answer?)

# Conclusion

MI

### The solution to church growth problems is more lay leaders (Main Idea).

Lessons

### The passage teaches some great leadership principles.

#### Choose leaders closest to the issues and trust them.

#### Have the people choose leaders they already respect.

#### Character is more important than experience or ability.

#### Church leaders must prioritize teaching and prayer.

### Application:

What to Do?

#### Consider how God allows problems in your life for your growth.

#### Ask God what role he wants you to play in this church.

#### Prioritize the word and prayer in your own life.

#### Attend our Loving Christ’s Church class by Pastor Jim.

Prayer

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### The account in Acts has alternated between external and internal threats to the newly formed Church—but the Spirit overcame them all.

### Acts 5 ends showing how the external threat of the Jewish leaders imprisoning and harming the apostles led to the opposite effect that they wanted—growth!

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### God wants us to embrace internal church problems as opportunities for growth.

### We especially need problems to lead us to raise up unifying new leaders instead of divisive self-serving leaders.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### The Roman Empire adopted the Greek language of those the Romans conquered. But the local language in Jerusalem was still largely Aramaic or Hebrew. So which language would win in the event of a disagreement?

#### Singapore faced this issue in the 1950s as the British influence waned. Would the country adopt English or Chinese or Malay?

#### Sri Lanka also faced the language issue in the 1970s and 1980s. English or Sinhala or Tamil?

### Widows faced difficulties in biblical times that few can identify with today. There was no society safety net where people saved up for retirement. As a result, few widows still had money after their husbands died.

#### Thus, their children supported them, as 1 Timothy 5:8 commands.

#### But what if the children died before their parents? Here the church stepped in to help support such widows over age 60 with a good reputation.

# Questions

### How much had the church grown by Acts 6?

#### Acts records many progress reports.

#### The initial 3000 who trusted Christ at Pentecost (Acts 2) grew to 5000 (Acts 5), and God added others daily even to this number.

### How did food distribution to Greek-speaking widows become a problem (6:1b)?

#### People typically do not learn new languages in their retirement years. We can assume that these widows were older, so if they spoke Hebrew all their life, they had an advantage to argue their case in Jerusalem.

#### While Greek-speaking Jewish widows spoke the international trade language, they were at a disadvantage in Jerusalem as most people spoke Hebrew.

### Why did the apostles conclude that their calling was teaching and prayer (2, 4)?

#### Teaching is the most demanding ministry in the church.

#### Prayer is probably the most difficult thing we do.

### Why did the church choose men instead of women to run the food program (3a)?

#### This was likely administration and carrying heavy loads rather than cooking.

#### Most online food deliveries are done by men! Few women want to climb up flights of stairs to our walk-up apartment!

### Why did the church choose seven men instead of some other number (3b)?

#### This is the perfect number, so this would be the perfect food program!

#### Just kidding. We don’t really know why seven was best.

### Why these qualifications instead of administrative ability (3c)?

#### The men handled a lot of money, so they needed already to be respected, Spirit-filled, and wise.

#### This underscores how character trumps ability.

### Why give the exact names of these men chosen (5)?

#### The problem related to discrimination against Greek speakers, so it be little help to appoint men who only spoke Hebrew.

#### All seven men had Greek names. In fact, Nicolas of Antioch was a Greek who previously converted to Judaism.

### Why is this passage important to Luke to share (7)?

#### Internal issues can lead to splits—there was a potential of a Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking church out of this.

#### Instead, the result was that God blessed the word that they protected. Both common people and priests “became obedient to the faith” (ESV).

### What leadership principles can we gain from this passage?

#### Choose leaders closest to the issues and trust them.

#### Have the people choose leaders they already respect.

#### Character is more important than experience or ability.

#### Church leaders must prioritize teaching and prayer.

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

*Three outlines by Dr Don Sunukjian…*

**Acts 6:1-6**

**Simple Inductive**

**Introduction**

1. We would all like to be part of a growing church (examples).

2. We think this would solve all our problems (examples).

3. But problems arise even within a growing church, sometimes because of the growth itself (examples).

4. Subject: When problems like these arise, how should we solve them?

5. For the answer, let’s see how the apostles solved a problem within the growing church of Acts 6:1-6.

**I. (The apostles solved the problem of growth by designating lay leadership.)**

A. The Jerusalem church was a growing church.

B. The church had the problem of the widow’s food.

C. The apostles solved the problem of growth by designating lay leadership.

**II. The solution to the problems of a growing church is to designate lay leadership (MI).**

A. An application of the MI to one area of life

B. An application of the MI to another area of life

**III. The solution to our problem…**

**Acts 6:1-6**

**Cyclical Inductive**

**Introduction**

1. We would all like to be part…

2. We think this would solve…

3. But problems arise even within…

4. Subject: How should we solve them?

5. For the answer… Acts 6:1-6.

**I. This church, like ours, is a growing church.**

A. The Jerusalem church was a growing church.

B. We are a growing church.

**II. But problems sometimes arise in a growing church.**

A. The Jerusalem church had the problem of the widow’s food.

B. We have such problems as... (examples)

**III. The way to solve these problems is to designate lay leadership (MI).**

A. The Jerusalem church solved…

1. The apostles proposed.

2. The people accepted.

3. The problem was solved.

B. The way to solve our problems is to for us to designate…

**Application within Sermon Structure** (3 of 3)

**Acts 6:1-6**

**Simple Deductive**

**Introduction**

1. We would all like to be part of a growing church (examples).

2. We think this would solve all our problems (examples).

3. But problems arise even within a growing church, sometimes because of the growth itself (examples).

4. MI: When problems arise, the way to solve them is to designate lay leadership.

5. This is how the apostles solved the problem in Acts 6:1-6.

**I. The solution to the problem of the growing Jerusalem church was to designate lay leadership.**

A. The Jerusalem church was a growing church.

B. The Jerusalem church had the problem of the widow’s food.

C. The designation of lay leadership solved the problem.

1. The apostles proposed.

2. The people accepted.

3. The problem was solved.

**II. The solution to our growth problems will be to designate lay leadership (MI)**

A. We are growing…

B. Our problems are…

C. The solution will be to designate lay leadership.

# Outlines

### New Testament Survey (Rick Griffith)

#### External opposition of the Sanhedrin after Peter and John heal a beggar enables witness to three different audiences (3:1–4:31).

##### Peter and John heal a crippled beggar at the temple in the name of Jesus (3:1-10).

##### Peter witnesses to three audiences (3:11–4:31).

###### Peter indicts *the Jews* for agreeing to kill the Son of God (3:11-26).

Jesus could heal the cripple because he is innocent and living (3:11-16).

Jesus is Israel’s promised king (Christ=Messiah) who will return to restore the kingdom after the nation believes (3:17-26).

###### Peter rejects *the Sanhedrin* command to stop preaching so that the church grows to 5000 (4:1-22).

The Sadducees oppose Peter and John preaching Christ’s resurrection but the church grows to 5000 (4:1-7).

Peter preaches the resurrected Jesus with the healed cripple beside him to the divided Sanhedrin (4:8-22).

###### Peter encourages *the church* to boldly preach despite the opposition of the rulers (4:23-31).

#### Internal opposition from Ananias and Sapphira’s deceit backfires to cause a fear of God needed for church growth (4:32–5:11).

##### Believers share their possessions selflessly so that no one is in need (4:32-37).

##### Ananias and Sapphira try to deceive the church so that they both die the same day (5:1-11).

#### Miraculous healings by the apostles expand the church beyond Jerusalem to people from nearby towns who bring others for healing (5:12-16).

#### External opposition of the Sanhedrin again persecutes the apostles so God could provide escape from jail and joy from suffering for Christ (5:17-42).

#### Internal opposition regarding food distribution is squashed by delegating seven managers to show God's commitment to his Church (6:1-7).

### Toussaint, “Acts,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*

# Possible Illustrations

### The Spirit sovereignly balances external and internal threats to grow the Church.

### ICS

#### External opposition came from officials who had 14 campuses for rent but would not consider ICS as it was a Christian school.

#### Internal opposition came from theological differences whether we would employ a New Age or Catholic principal.

### CIC

#### External opposition came from another church that intercepted people coming into the YMCA to get them to come to their church instead.

#### Internal threats once came from the wrong leader who asked people to leave if they did not agree with him.

### Pastor Mike McClure at Calvary Chapel in San Jose has been fined almost $2.5 million for violating space ordinances for the church that exceed those of other organizations. <https://www.frc.org/updatearticle/20210225/love-neighbor>

#### Pastor Mike McClure, Senior Pastor of Calvary Chapel in San Jose, Calif., has exemplified this bravery in the face of unprecedented government clampdowns on churches in his home state, as he and his church are at the tip of the spear in the legal battle over bans on church gatherings. His church has been fined almost $2.5 million for holding indoor services with the same capacity limits that other parts of the state require and for, of all things, singing. But despite the challenges, Pastor McClure was awed by how God was at work.

#### "I will tell you, it's been a great opportunity to share the gospel. Many people have been coming to Christ, and it's been very fruitful. We've even had some great conversations with the prosecuting attorneys -- we've just been sharing the love of Christ with everybody, and that's what the church is really here to do. It's amazing when you do that, how the Lord just shows up, and we've seen Him just at work in the midst of all that's going on..."

#### McClure went on to describe how desperate people are for spiritual food during the pandemic. "I know how needy the sheep are right now. I hear it. I'm with them. And they're so desperate for someone to minister to them, to pray for them, to be personally in contact with them..." He also related how a county worker who answers the county suicide hotline came to his church because he himself was contemplating suicide, and how he received Christ and brought his friend who also received Christ. "As much as the church is being persecuted, this is exactly where God wants us to be," McClure said.

#### McClure also struck a note of warning and of hope for what may lie ahead for the church in America. "We've got to have courage and understand that we as a people can make a difference if we pray and seek the Lord and seek His face, that he's looking for those that will intercede ... I know there are people praying. I know we can make a huge difference, and I do believe all of this is preparatory for God to revive the church, to bring reformation to our church, to the country. He's going to do it by His spirit, not by might but by His spirit. I'm looking forward to what God's going to do."

# PPT Text Boxes

Title

# Possible Applications

Title

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Title

### Consider how God allows problems in your life for your growth.

### Ask God what role he wants you to play in this church.

### Prioritize the word and prayer in your own life.

### Attend our Loving Christ’s Church class by Pastor Jim.

### Appoint new leaders in prayer: Cherry, Vivek, & Veena (children), Madhan (bass)

**Problem Solved—By YOU!**

***Acts 6:1-7***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea: The way the apostles solved the food problem caused growth was by designating lay leadership.*

# I. The blessing of God on the Jerusalem church was that he caused it to grow (1a).

# II. The problem the growing church had was that the widow’s food distribution favored the Hebrew-speaking over the Greek-speaking widows (1b).

# III. The way the apostles solved the growth problem was by designating lay leadership (2-7).

## The apostles proposed a plan to choose lay leaders (2-4).

### The apostles from Galilee called a public meeting of the locals (2a).

### They shared their priority of teaching over administration (2b).

### They asked the locals to choose seven respected administrators (3a).

### They committed to appoint those selected (3b).

### The reaffirmed their commitment to teaching and prayer (4).

## The church followed the plan (5-6).

### Everyone liked the idea (5a).

### They chose seven Greek-speakers to lead the food issues (5b).

### The apostles appointed “The Seven” to the task (6).

## God blessed the result (7).

### God’s word continued to spread (7a).

### The Jerusalem church grew instead of splitting (7b).

### Many Jewish priests trusted Christ (7c).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will join at least one ministry to help solve our church growth issues.

**Homiletical Outline** (Simple inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Internal issues can hinder our growth.

### Need: What should we do as a church to accommodate growth?

### Subject: How should we solve the growth issues we face?

### Background: Our study in Acts is in week 6 and we’ve seen how the Spirit caused growth.

### Preview: Today let’s see how the early church solved an internal issue related to growth.

### Text: Acts 6 continues the account with an internal issue related to growth.

(So what was the problem in Acts 6?)

# I. [The apostles solved a food problem caused growth by designating lay leaders (6:1-7).]

## The blessing of God on the Jerusalem church caused it to grow (1a).

## But the growing church had a food distribution problem (1b).

### Money was given to take care of those in need (4:34-35).

### However, Hebrew-speaking widows got more food than Greek-speaking widows.

## The apostles solved the growth problem by appointing lay leaders (2-7).

### The apostles proposed a plan to choose lay leaders (2-4).

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#### God’s word continued to spread (7a).

#### The Jerusalem church grew instead of splitting (7b).

#### Many Jewish priests trusted Christ (7c).

(So what is the main principle here?)

# II. The solution to church growth problems is more lay leaders (MI).

## The worldly solution is to put more work on less people.

## God’s solution is more leaders to spread the blessing to more people.

(And how does this passage relate specifically to us?)

# III. We must appoint more leaders to handle our growth (MI Applied).

## We will continue to seek truth—not growth.

## We need more leaders of ministries.

(We began with this issue: How should we solve the growth issues we face? What’s the answer?)

# Conclusion

### The solution to church growth problems is more lay leaders (Main Idea).

### The passage teaches some great leadership principles.

#### Choose leaders closest to the issues and trust them.

#### Have the people choose leaders they already respect.

#### Character is more important than experience or ability.

#### Church leaders must prioritize teaching and prayer.

### What to do?

#### Consider how God allows problems in your life for your growth.

#### Ask God what role he wants you to play in this church.

#### Prioritize the word and prayer in your own life.

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### Prayer





**Rick Griffith**

7 March 2021

Message 6 of 23

**Problem Solved—By YOU!**

***Acts 6:1-7***

# Introduction

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### What should we do as a church to accommodate growth?

### How should we solve the growth issues we face?

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#### God’s word continued to spread (7a).

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# II. The solution to church growth problems is more lay leaders (Main Idea).

## The worldly solution is to put more work on less people.

## God’s solution is more leaders to spread the blessing to more people.

# III. We must appoint more leaders to handle our growth (Main Idea Applied).

## We will continue to seek truth—not growth.

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Download this sermon PPT and notes for free at BibleStudyDownloads.org/resource/new-testament-preaching/