

Success Creates a Mess | Acts 6:1-7 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To better expect church to have a mess of needs and to be mobilized to care for and meet those needs in ways we can.

Icebreaker: What is a workplace or job that ended up being more messy than you anticipated?

Transition: As the church grew in Jerusalem, it started to face increasing opposition from the outside as well as new internal tensions on the inside of the church. The church grew not just numerically, but also added people from different races, cultures, and backgrounds which set up the tension we're looking at today.

Discussion

Read:

[Proverbs 14:4](#)

⁴Without oxen a stable stays clean,
but you need a strong ox for a large harvest.

1. Keith made the point that success and mess go together from this verse. What are some ways you have seen mess come with success?

Read:

[Acts 6:1](#)

¹In 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.

Read:

The difference between Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews:

- *Language Difference: Greek speaking vs. Aramaic speaking*
- *Hellenistic Jews lived in other countries but returned while Hebraic Jews remained*
- *Culture Difference: Greek culture vs. Jewish culture*

Widows had hardly any financial opportunities to provide for themselves.

- *Dependent upon families which some widows did not have.*
- *Some widows were perhaps alienated from their families due to their conversion.*
- *Some were perhaps being overlooked due to language/culture barriers or perhaps even favoritism.*

2. How could the apostles have felt or responded to this problem?

Read:

[Acts 6:2-6](#)

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.

3. What do you notice about what the apostles do in response to the problem?

Read:

Keith told us about several kinds of messes that growing churches experience:

- *Messy people are brought into the church.*
- *Diverse people are brought into the church.*
- *Needy people are brought into the church.*
- *Sinful people are brought into the church.*
- *The chances for misunderstanding are increased.*

4. What did you find helpful or challenging about learning to expect this kind of mess?

Read:

[Acts 6:7](#)

THE **crossing** **small groups**

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.

5. Verse 7 tells us that the Word of God spread and the number of disciples increased, particularly priests. What is the correlation?
6. Why is it a powerful demonstration when the church cares for people like Acts 6 describes?

Optional Dig Deeper Question: What is a way you could help our church better care for others?

Sharing and Prayer:

Have people pray for needs or specific people they know about at The Crossing.

Or...

Have people pray for our various care ministries: Recovery Support Groups, Cancer Care, Chronically Courageous, Divorce Recovery, Foster and Adoption Ministry, Graceful Wait, Grief Recovery, One to One, Single Moms, Card Writing Team, Community Response Team, Fix It Team, Funeral Team, Meals Team, Prayer Ministry, Prayer Shawl Team, and Visitation Team.