

What happens when a movement grows faster than its leadership can manage? That is exactly the tension we find in Acts 6, and the lessons it holds for us are just as urgent today as they were in the early church. The passage opens with a real conflict: widows from one cultural background felt they were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Rather than minimize the complaint or absorb it into an already overloaded leadership structure, the apostles made a decision that would change the trajectory of the church forever. They recognized that no small group of gifted individuals was ever meant to carry the full weight of the mission. They called the wider community to identify people full of the Spirit and wisdom, and they handed off responsibility with trust and intention. The result was explosive growth. The word of God spread rapidly, and even many who had once stood in opposition to Jesus came to faith. The spiritual insight here cuts straight to the heart of how we often approach church life. We are conditioned by a culture that rewards spectators and elevates celebrities, but the kingdom of God was designed as a body, every part essential, every member carrying a function. When we each step into the ministry God has shaped us for, the harvest multiplies in ways no single person could produce alone. The question this passage puts before us is both simple and searching: where has God gifted and called us, and are we willing to step into that with full ownership rather than passive attendance?

Title: Growing Together: The Church, Its Members, and an Eternal Mindset

Sermon Summary: Drawing from Acts chapter 6, this sermon examines the early church's response to growth-related challenges and draws timeless principles for the modern church. As the Jerusalem church expanded, logistical problems arose between Hellenistic and Hebraic Jewish widows over the distribution of food. Rather than allowing a few leaders to carry all responsibility, the apostles wisely delegated to seven Spirit-filled men, freeing themselves to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word. The result was rapid growth and even the conversion of many priests who had previously opposed the faith. The sermon challenges believers to identify and operate in their God-given gifts, to guard against being stirred up by the wrong influences, and to maintain an eternal mindset when walking through personal trials. The closing portion of the sermon addresses a serious situation involving a church staff member, calling the congregation to seek truth, extend grace, cooperate with authorities, and trust God through difficulty.

Key Points:

- When the church grows, so does the potential for problems to grow
- The church was not designed to rest on the shoulders of a few gifted people
- Growth happens when individuals in the church operate in their giftings and callings
- Those who were once in opposition to Jesus can and do come to faith in him
- Believers must be careful about who and what is stirring them up, ensuring it aligns with God's Word rather than worldly agitation
- Walking through trials requires an eternal mindset, keeping eyes fixed on Jesus rather than on temporary circumstances

Stories:

- The pastor reflected on raising three daughters and the way family complexity grows with each additional child, drawing a parallel to how problems and workload multiply as a church grows
- He recalled the early days of parenting when his first daughter slept through the night, leading him to believe parenting was simple, only to discover greater challenges with subsequent children
- He shared a personal story of his leg falling asleep as a child, causing him to collapse when he stood, using it as an illustration of what happens when members of the body of Christ are spiritually inactive
- He recounted working at a Frito-Lay warehouse in Minneapolis during college, initially wanting to avoid coworkers who seemed far from God, but feeling called to pray for them by name and eventually being given opportunities to share his faith
- He referenced the testimony of a woman named Irm Hess, who was involved in a serious car accident, suffered broken bones, and yet used every hospital visit and rehabilitation appointment as an opportunity to tell people about Jesus, demonstrating an eternal mindset in the midst of suffering

Acts 6:1-15 -- The primary passage for the sermon, covering the appointment of the seven, the growth of the church, and the arrest of Stephen.

Matthew 9:36-38 -- Jesus speaks about the plentiful harvest and the need for workers.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 -- The body of Christ is made up of many parts, each with a role.

Hebrews 10:24-25 -- Believers are called to stir one another up toward love and good works and to not neglect gathering together.

Haggai 1:14 -- God stirs up the spirit of the people to do his work.

James 1:5 -- The school verse referenced at the close: asking God for wisdom, which he gives generously.

Acts 4:19-20 -- The apostles' willingness to preach in the face of death, referenced when discussing their boldness before religious leaders.

Acts 5:34-39 -- Gamaliel's counsel to the Sanhedrin warning against fighting against God, referenced during discussion of priests coming to faith.

Exodus 34:29-35 -- Moses' face glowing with God's glory, referenced in the commentary on Stephen's glowing face.

1 Corinthians 13:6 -- Love does not rejoice in evil but rejoices in truth, paraphrased in the closing prayer.

The apostles recognized that they could not do everything alone and needed to delegate responsibility so they could focus on their primary calling -- in what ways might you be holding onto responsibilities that God is calling you to release to others, and what might that free you to focus on?

The sermon challenges the modern 'celebrity pastor' mindset where churchgoers become spectators rather than participants -- how has a consumer mentality affected your own engagement with the body of Christ, and what would it look like to shift from spectator to active participant?

Acts 6 describes the seven chosen men as being 'full of the Spirit and wisdom' -- what do you think it looks like practically to be known for those qualities in your everyday life, and how are you cultivating them?

The pastor used the image of a sleeping limb to describe believers who are not operating in their gifts -- what areas of your God-given calling or gifting might be 'asleep,' and what would it take to wake them up?

A large number of priests, who had been among the greatest opponents of the early church, came to faith in Christ -- how does this challenge your assumptions about who is too far gone to be reached by the gospel?

The sermon warns that we live in a culture that is constantly trying to stir up our emotions, and asks whether we are being stirred up by God for the right reasons or by the world for the wrong reasons -- how do you personally discern the difference in your own life?

Hebrews 10:24-25 calls believers to stir one another up toward love and good works -- in what specific and intentional ways are you encouraging the people around you toward those ends, rather than waiting to be encouraged yourself?

Stephen's face glowed like an angel even as he faced arrest and potential death, suggesting a peace rooted in an eternal mindset -- what trials in your own life have revealed whether your mindset is more fixed on the temporary or the eternal?

The pastor shared how praying for his coworkers by name opened doors to share his faith in an unlikely environment -- how might consistent, intentional prayer for the difficult people in your life change both them and your posture toward them?

The sermon closes with a call for the church community to seek truth, demonstrate grace, and trust God in the midst of a painful and disorienting situation -- what does it look like practically to hold truth and grace together when a community faces a crisis, rather than defaulting to either judgment or denial?