



God's Grace in Solving Problems

Acts 6:1-7
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The Big Idea: At a time of growth and blessing the early church a serious problem arose involving how one group of women were being helped compared to another group. **Conflicts** are a natural and expected part of all meaningful relationships like within a church. The way we handle the conflicts determine whether Christ is **glorified** and whether our church is strengthened and our witness is magnified or deeply damaged.

□ There are 2 fatal mistakes any church can make:

- Being so **outwardly** focused that the legitimate needs and concerns of the disciples are not cared for.
- Being so **inwardly** focused that the church loses its Gospel mission to the spiritually lost.

God's Expectations Concerning the Vulnerable Ones

1. The commands to care for the widows and orphans flow directly from **God's heart** for them: He is a "father to the fatherless and defender of widows". [Psalm 68:5]
2. In **farming** practices, provide for them: Deuteronomy 24:19-21
3. Deuteronomy 10:18; Isaiah 1:17; James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:16
4. 1 Timothy 5 teaches that the first line of care and defense for widows and their children should be their own **families**. If the family can't care or if there is no other family, then the responsibility rests on the **church**.

Acts 6:1-7 (ESV)

6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.
² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables."

³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.
⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.
⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.
⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

A Model of Assessing the Problems

The twelve explained what was at stake. It was not ultimately a racial, cultural, or financial issue. It was a spiritual problem that put two **good things** at odds:

- Preaching the word.
- Serving tables.

But the Apostles taught that both were **necessary**, legitimate, and **significant** for the life and health of the church.

Truths That Still Apply Today:

- There are unmet needs and overlooked people in every church. These are opportunities for God's **grace** to work in us.
- It's **not wrong** to talk about your concerns.
- All Christians are gifted to serve in the ministry of the Church. Find what you're **good** at and do it with **joy**!
- There are always two factors to consider: **willingness** and **qualifications**. How are you doing in those two areas your life?
- As a church, are we willing to commit to the proper balance of both inward and outward ministries? Are you ready to **do your** part and be a **cheerleader** for others who are doing theirs?

The Bottom Line: *To solve problems in the local church, both leaders and the members must be spiritual people who are living in submission to God's Word and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.*
