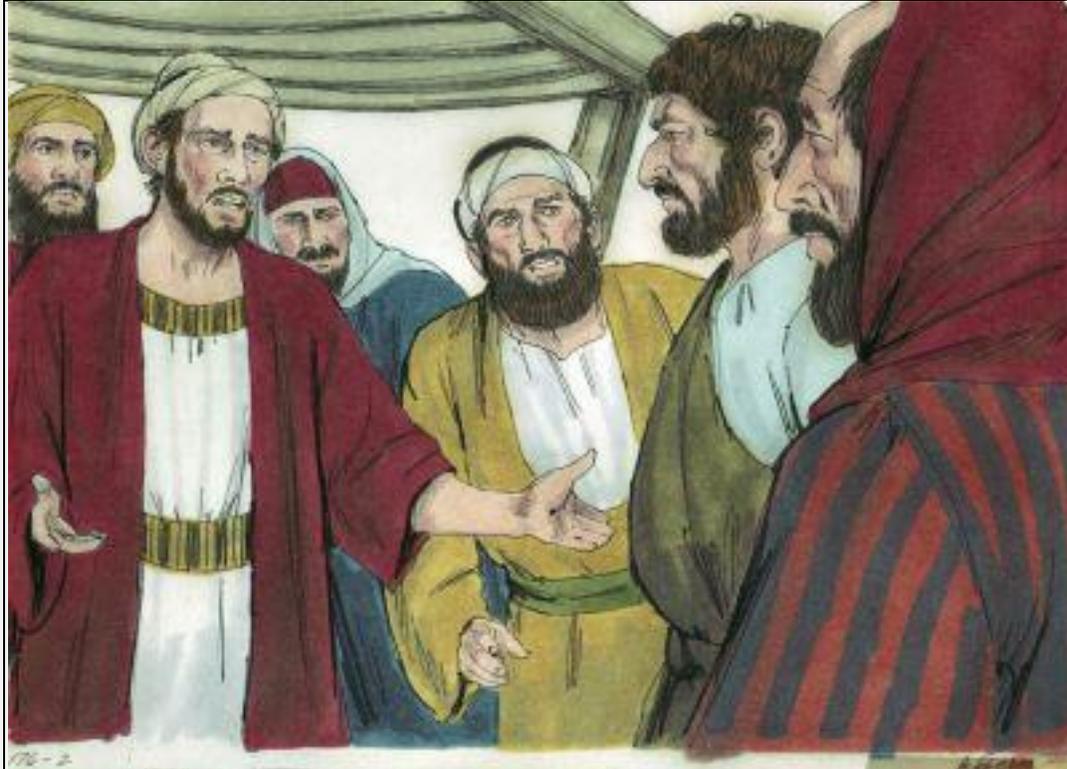


# PART 9: GROWING PAINS

## ACTS 6:1-7 SUMMARY

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### MAIN IDEA

**Growing churches will face both blessings and challenges**

## I. WE SHOULD CELEBRATE GOSPEL-CENTERED CHURCH GROWTH (6A, 7)

### A. People react differently to church growth.

1. Some like it because it will spread the gospel.
2. Others are fearful that growth may adversely affect the church.
3. Some people are skeptical about church growth because they associate a big church with an unfaithful church.

### B. The church must stay focused on the gospel, not on growth.

1. The early church grew because of its passionate gospel preaching.
2. Using gimmicks to attract people will expand a church but not grow a church.
3. Growth can be emphasized to build one's own kingdom, not God's

kingdom.

4. The Lord added to the early church as it preached God's Word.
5. It is possible that this early church numbered about 20,000 people.
6. Revelation 7:9 reminds us of the great number of the people belonging to the body of Christ.

## **II. WE SHOULD EXPECT PROBLEMS WHEN THE CHURCH GROWS (6:1-7)**

### **A. Not all growth is pure growth.**

1. Even in the early church both true converts and pretenders were present such as Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) and Simon the Magician (8:9-25).

### **B. The early church was a model church but it was not a perfect church.**

1. It experienced many wins and also some failures (e.g., failing to attend to the needs of the widows).
2. Even good churches fail at some things, at least temporarily.

### **C. Seven ways to protect the church as it grows.**

1. Maintain its unity.
2. Adapt wisely to growth needs.
3. Protect overloaded leaders.
4. Deal with criticism graciously.
5. Maintain the proper church priorities.
6. Delegate tasks as church needs become greater.
7. Do compassionate and efficient management while aggressively advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **III. WE SHOULD PROTECT BIBLICAL PRIORITIES, MAKE WISE ADJUSTMENTS AND SHARE THE MINISTRY...ALL IN A SPIRIT OF LOVE (6:2-6)**

### **A. When conflict arises, go to the Bible first.**

1. Avoid relying on gut instincts when conflict arises.
2. When making strategic changes ask, "Is this the biblical approach?"
3. When deciding how to handle a conflict make sure the response is based on loving God and loving others.

### **B. Without the gospel of Jesus Christ there would be no church.**

1. Take care of the needs of others but not at the risk of failing to preach the gospel.
2. Make wise adjustments as needs arise but always protect the preaching of the gospel.
3. While maintaining biblical priorities churches must be willing to adapt

and make changes.

#### IV. WE SHOULD SEE GROWTH PROBLEMS AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE GOSPEL-CENTERED GROWTH (6:7)

**A. Impediments to growth can become occasions for growth when the church maintains its priorities.**

1. When the early church grew it put more demands on the apostles so they delegated responsibilities to others enabling them to stay focused on preaching the gospel and prayer.
2. Even a large number of priests<sup>1</sup> became obedient to the faith.

**B. The Holy Spirit worked powerfully through a small group of disciples to bring others to God's, even enemies of the faith.**

1. We are to share the gospel but let God change hearts.
2. When churches focus on nurturing believers, the numbers will follow.

#### V. APPLICATION

- A. Pray for your church as it cares for the needs of people that it will emphatically proclaim the \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. Pray regularly for your church leaders that they will have wisdom in dealing with \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. Remember, it was the Lord who \_\_\_\_\_ when it was faithful to him.

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<sup>1</sup> Some Bible commentators, such as John Polhill, believe there were as many as 8,000 priests living in Jerusalem at the time.