

Acts 6: Food Programs are Dumb

Now that I got your attention...

Well, it didn't take long for grumbling and complaining to arrive at Jerusalem First Church. I mean really, it's going to be a problem anytime your church grows between five and three thousand every time you're together. Can you imagine? Every service you go to another 5,000 people are baptized and added to your church role? It's no wonder when we get to Chapter 6, we see a breakdown in the church's organizational structure.

Realistically the number one problem in the church we find here is a lack of organization. But don't blame the apostles, they've just been figuratively told to build a car from a scratch! Oh, and by the way, you're going to put it together while traveling down the road at 90mph! We can't forget that the church was born on the Day of Pentecost, which wasn't that long ago from this situation.

Ministry in the newly founded church is booming! They didn't have an opportunity for a "soft opening," they had people showing up by the droves. People were gathering to hear the teaching of the apostles. They're meeting from house to house all over the city, breaking bread together, celebrating Communion, and baptizing new believers. Needs begin to be communicated and met as they build relationships in community. Remember, the new believers willingly sold property and gave to anyone in need. They were leading out of what they read in a magazine or book, instead, all of this is happening under the leading of the Holy Spirit. But there's a problem that needs a solution.

Problem to Solution

I can relate to the apostles here, as a pastor I'm daily faced with the task of problem solving and finding solutions for the church. **So, what's the problem:**

Acts 6:1 (NLT) *But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.*

As a famous Warden once said, "What we have here, is a failure to communicate." So, we have two groups of people. On one hand you have the native Hebrews who live in Jerusalem and live in Israel, and then you've got the Jews who came for the Passover and were converted to Christ and are still there. But they're from the Greek world. So, the church was born from native Jews and Jews who came to celebrate Passover but never left. **This is the problem, now for the solution:**

Acts 6:2-4 (NLT) **2** *So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program.* **3** *And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit*

and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. 4 Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."

Since *EVERYTHING* rested on the apostles to this point. They were wise to start thinking about solutions. At first glance, people would think their solution was because they thought food programs were beneath them. ***This simply isn't true.*** The NLT translates the words into "food program," but the original is actually "serving tables."

Serving Tables

What does it mean, "serving tables?" On one hand it could mean serving meals. It could mean that the Greek-speaking (Hellenistic) Jews were feeling left out of meals that local widow's (Hebrews) were receiving. Or it may not be a meal table at all. In fact, the word used for "table" here is the same word for the table Jesus turned over in the Temple. Serving tables could have either meant food or the distribution of funds.

So the apostles are communicating that they can't do it all, it's just too much! "We can't oversee the bookkeeping, worship, distribution of money, and feeding everyone!"

Serving the Word

The apostles understood that in order for the church to grow spiritually, they needed to be devoted to "serving" the word. The word for "teaching the word (NLT)" is *diakoneō*, which literally translates to the word "serve." Basically, the disciples are saying, "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the *diakonia* of the Word. You have to find somebody to do that. We have to serve the Word.

Result

Because of this wise solution we see an impact on the church in verse 7: *So, God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.*

In the end the disciples didn't think serving tables or running a food program wasn't beneath them, instead, they did what any good pastor should do; delegate, pray, and serve the word.