

Navigating Growing Pains

Things that grow often experience growing pains. Families face this. Organizations deal with this. Churches too. As a church grows, inevitably there will be new needs and opportunities that arise. Problems pop up. Ministry structures that worked in the earlier days no longer serve the church well at another stage of its development. For any church to stay healthy and on mission, there will be a need to navigate growing pains. As we come to Acts 6, we will see an example of how the early church navigated a critical growing pain in her development.

Opening Discussion: What necessary, but difficult change have you experienced in your church experience (at Faith or elsewhere)?

Read Acts 6:1-7

1. What sticks out to you in this passage?
2. Luke mentions that a complaint was raised by one group in the church (the Hellenists) against another group (the Hebrews). What was the complaint? What might have happened if the apostles didn't address this problem?
3. Why do you think the apostles said that it was not right for them to give up preaching the word of God to serve tables (v. 2)? Were they saying that meeting practical needs is not as important? Why or why not?
4. Organizing the daily serving of food was primarily administrative. Why then did the apostles charge the church with selecting men with the spiritual qualities that they did? And what were the qualifications?

5. All the names of the men selected were Hellenistic suggesting that they all came from the Hellenistic part of the church. What might be the implications of this?

Brian said:

Sometimes people will say, "I wish we could just do church like the early church. Let's just copy what they did." Well, is that when the apostles oversaw the ministry of the word AND meeting practical needs, or when the apostles delegated meeting practical needs to other leaders? Certainly, there are things we want to copy, but I believe that if we want to follow the early church, one way we do that is by adapting and changing to meet needs. **A growing, healthy church will adapt and change to meet needs and stay on mission.**

6. If a church is going to adapt and change to meet needs and stay on mission what will this require from the leaders of the church? What will it require of the congregation?

7. Are there changes that you sense Faith needs to be thinking about to better meet needs and stay on mission of making disciples?

Brian said:

If we are going to remain a growing, healthy church then **"insiders" need to be willing to adapt for new people.** Until this appointment of new leaders, all the leaders in the church are from the Hebrew part of the church. But with the appointment of these seven men, leadership is now delegated to a group from the Hellenistic part of the church. The "insiders" were willing to adapt for new people. This is not easy. Most of us commit to a church because we like how things are right now. We like the way children and youth ministries are run. We like the adult ministries. We like the style of worship. We are here because we like things the way things are. And yet, if we are going to be a growing, healthy church, we need to be willing to adapt to new people and new needs.

8. What do you think about this idea that "insiders" need to be willing to change for new people? What kind changes might this mean?

9. What is your main application from this study?