

## SOME THOUGHTS ON LIFE TOGETHER

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### INTRODUCTION:

As you may observe by looking around you, we are now worshiping together in one service, instead of the two services we have had for the last year and half. This was not a decision made lightly, and part of the decision depended upon us having a message dedicated to the various issues surrounding this kind of logistical dilemma. So here we are.

### THE TEXT:

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:1-7).

### SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

First, notice that their problem was caused by growth (v. 1), and their solution to it resulted in growth (v. 7). Growth brings about growth problems (v. 1), in this case a particular group being overlooked. Consider how ordinary and how predictable such a problem would be. The apostles responded with a proposal to delegate responsibility for this particular problem (vv. 2-3). They, for their part, were going to keep their focus on the ministry, that which was causing the growth (v. 4). And so the congregation chose seven godly men (with Hellenistic names, note), and they were set before the apostles, who ordained them (vv. 5-6). The end result of this godly solution to a dispute was godly growth (v. 7). The early church did not float through the book of Acts, never quite touching down. They were real people, with real irritations, and, we may assume, with real comebacks that could have set off a real quarrel.

### GROWTH AND GROWTH:

The initial thoughts are taken from this text, but we are also going to assemble some biblical principles from elsewhere. First, we must distinguish growth problems from wasting disease problems. Growth is good compared to the dull as dishwater ministry of the scribes (Matt. 7:29; Acts 13:45). Growth is not an automatic good, but it can be a great good. So we also need to distinguish growth blessings from growth curses. Not everything that grows is good. Cancer grows. Morning glory grows. False teaching grows (2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:17). And when growth problems occur, they don't solve themselves (Acts 6:3). When godly leadership of one sort causes a difficulty, godly leadership of another sort is needed to address it.

### ORGANIZED SOLUTIONS:

A balance must be maintained between focusing on the main thing, and solving the distracting problem (Acts 6: 4, 3). Giving ourselves to one or the other is foolish. This is why a godly approach must be applied both to the spiritual side of the ministry and the practical side of the ministry. In this place, the men they appointed to address their practical problem were “full of the Holy Spirit.” They didn't appoint the impractical sky-pilots to the

spiritual stuff and then appoint “realistic” worldly men to the practical side of things. Godly principles apply to everything, everywhere, and they must be applied by men who understand this.

#### BASIC ORIENTATION:

Koinonia fellowship is the work of the Holy Spirit. As we gather to worship God, He knits us together, and we glorify Him together. This can be intimidating to outsiders, and we should not try to make that go away (Acts 5:12-14; I Cor. 14:25). At the same time, in the growth of God’s community, a clear priority should be placed on welcoming visitors and outsiders (Dt. 26:11). There is a real difference between the clannish and sectarian exclusion of outsiders and the scary prospect of real community. This is why our deacons, for example, have set aside two rows for visitors.

#### SEATING, PARKING, AND THE HELLENISTIC WIDOWS:

And a balance needs to be maintained between provision for those you are responsible for (I Tim. 5:8) and adaptability in the light of larger concerns (Heb. 13:17)—and the needs that those who are responsible for those larger concerns have. So if the deacons ask you to do something, an appropriate response would not be, “This ain’t Russia, pal.”

#### THE WHOLE POINT:

And last, but also first, the task before us in establishing a worship service is to worship God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12: 28-29). Just as we want to sing songs that God wants to hear, and not those which we want to sing, so also we want a service that is acceptable to Him in the first place, and our convenience occupying a subordinate place. This does not mean that two services dishonor Him (it depends, right?), but simply means that given our particular circumstances at this point in time, we should be largely focused on what would glorify God the most. Then we labor to make that happen. We want to do this across the board—with the fellowship, with the music, with the energy, with Word and sacraments.



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