

Summary

This sermon from Acts 6:1-7 explores how the early church handled a significant conflict regarding food distribution between Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews. The apostles demonstrated godly leadership by addressing the issue head-on, involving the entire congregation in finding a solution, and empowering others to take leadership roles. Remarkably, the predominantly Hebraic Jewish congregation chose seven Hellenistic Jews to lead this important ministry, showing extraordinary unity and justice. The passage teaches that healthy churches confront conflict biblically, pursue unity and justice as kingdom priorities, and recognize that effective ministry requires the participation of all believers. When the church handles conflict well and pursues justice, it becomes attractive to outsiders and leads to growth in discipleship.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today grateful for Your Word and the wisdom it provides for living in community. As we gather to discuss this passage from Acts, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us. Help us to be honest about areas where we struggle with conflict, unity, and justice. Holy Spirit, guide our conversation and help us to see how we can apply these truths in our own lives and church community. May we be receptive to Your leading and willing to be challenged and changed. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one thing you appreciate most about being part of a community or group, whether it's your family, workplace, church, or friend group?

Key Verses

1. Acts 6:1-7
2. Ephesians 4:11-12

Questions

1. What stands out to you most about how the apostles handled this conflict in Acts 6? How does their approach differ from how conflicts are often handled today?
2. The Hellenistic Jews were essentially 'outsiders' who were given leadership over this important ministry. What does this teach us about how the church should treat those who might be considered different or on the margins?
3. Pastor Rick mentioned that 'healthy churches confront conflict.' Why do you think many churches and Christians tend to avoid conflict instead of addressing it biblically?
4. How do you personally tend to handle conflict - do you avoid it, confront it aggressively, or try to address it constructively? What might need to change in your approach?
5. The sermon emphasized that pursuing unity and justice leads to church growth. How have you seen this principle play out in your own experience or observations?

6. What's the difference between converts and disciples as mentioned in the sermon? Why is this distinction important for how we think about church growth?
7. The apostles recognized they needed to focus on their calling while empowering others to serve. How can we better identify and use our own gifts and passions for ministry?
8. What are some practical ways our church or small group can better pursue unity and justice in our community, even when it might be difficult or unpopular?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of conflict or tension in your life (whether personal, family, work, or church-related) that you've been avoiding or handling poorly. Commit to addressing it biblically - with prayer, humility, and a focus on unity and justice rather than just getting your way. Also, consider how God might be calling you to use your gifts and passions to serve others, particularly those who might be overlooked or marginalized.

Key Takeaways

1. Healthy churches confront conflict biblically rather than avoiding it or letting it fester and divide the community
2. The church grows when unity and justice are pursued as kingdom priorities, not just social or political issues
3. Effective ministry requires the participation and gifts of all believers, not just the leadership
4. True discipleship means being willing to empower and elevate others, even those who might be considered 'outsiders'
5. When the church handles difficult situations well, it becomes attractive to those outside the faith and leads to genuine discipleship growth

Ending Prayer

Father God, thank You for the example of the early church and how they handled conflict with grace, wisdom, and unity. Help us to be a people who don't shy away from difficult conversations but approach them with Your heart for justice and reconciliation. Show us where You're calling us to step up and serve, and give us the courage to empower others, especially those who might be different from us. May our lives and our church be a testimony to Your kingdom values of unity, justice, and love. Help us to be part of the movement You're building in our community and beyond. In Jesus' name, Amen.