

God's Providence in our Problems

Acts 6:1-7

Jesus is not only the subject of the mission. He is the Director of the mission. He isn't just the Savior of His people. He is the Sovereign over all things.

The Book of Acts is not the Book of Accidents.

King Jesus is building His kingdom. Even the problems aren't problems. They are providences. They are opportunities for King Jesus to advance His kingdom as He matures His people.

As Christ grows his kingdom out, He grows his people up.

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:33-36

I. Missional Growth Inevitably Brings Growing Pains.

Acts 6:1

“Now in the days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because the widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.” (Acts 6:1)

This is the first use of the word "disciple" in the book of Acts.

Christ is the Lead Disciple-maker who is at work growing His disciples through the mission of the church.

"This calling is not simply a call to evangelism. It isn't merely a call to get members for our churches. Rather, Christ calls us to make disciples. Disciples are people who have wholeheartedly committed to follow the thinking and conduct of the Master. Such discipleship is a lifelong experience of learning the mind of

Christ and following the will of Christ, submitting ourselves in full obedience to His Lordship.” R.C. Sproul

Christ lets a complaint arise in order to begin to do a deep work of grace and mercy in and through the church.

“Cursed be anyone who perverts justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.’ And all the people shall say, Amen.’” Deuteronomy 27:19

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” James 1:27

Jesus is growing His church up because He is preparing to send His church out.

II. Missional Clarity: Growing Pains Give Opportunity for Fostering Missional Clarity. Acts 6:2

“And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.’” Acts 6:2

Only the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit can overcome sin and the huge barriers that sin has placed between God and people, and people with one another.

Jesus had missional clarity:

“And rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said, to him, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’ And he said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.’” Mark 1:35-38

Moses needed Missional Clarity:

“Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.’”
(Exodus 18:17-20)

The apostle Paul had missional clarity:

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

“The purpose of his Spirit-anointed ministry was to proclaim good news to the poor (Luke 4:18-19). He came to call sinners to repentance and faith (Mark 1:15; 2:17). Although Jesus frequently attended to the physical needs of those around him, there is not a single example of Jesus going into a town with the purpose of healing or casting out demons. The Son of Man never ventured out on a healing or exorcism tour. His stated purpose was to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).” Kevin DeYoung

III. Collective Responsibility: Growing Pains Give Opportunity for Fostering Collective Responsibility. Acts 6:3-4

“Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you, seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.” (Acts 6:3)

“Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they

shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.” (Exodus 18:21-22)

“Choose for your tribes wise, understanding and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.” (Deut. 1:13).

a. Christ-like Character/Integrity (that is the priority listed for us in 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

b. Evidence of A Holy Spirit Driven Life .

What is evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

- They love Jesus. (John 14:15-21)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

- They look like Jesus. (Galatians 5:22-24)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

- They live for Jesus. (I Corinthians 12:5-11)

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same

God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”

c. Wisdom – The capacity to not only quote the Bible but to apply it for the good of the body.

IV. Unity in Diversity: Growing Pains Give Opportunity to Grow In Unity.
Acts 6:5

“And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.” (Acts 6:5)

“Unknown to the apostles, the bicultural leaders from the church’s current minority, somewhat at home in two different cultural spheres, would form the bridge to the majority of the church’s future.”

Craig Keener

“Now there were in the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord, and fasting the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”

Acts 13:1-3

**V. Credibility: Growing Pains Give Opportunity to Increase Gospel Credibility.
Acts 6:6-7**

“These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:6-7)

“Jesus had the remarkable ability to draw people from the most culturally incompatible backgrounds into a new community. His disciples were nationalist zealots, cultural traitors (tax collectors), Pharisees, peasants, women, lepers and everyone in between. He created portals of grace that gave people new identities. No longer were they denied by strict cultural categories or past sins; they were called sons and daughters of a loving Father. His environment of welcome plus the transformation of old identities, resulting in a new humanity, has changed history forever.”

Jon Tyson