

# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

**Date** : 15 September 2024  
**Sermon Title** : A Godly Response  
**Speaker** : Rev Kenneth Huang  
**Text** : Acts 6:1-7

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As we move into Acts Chapter 6:1–7, we will see just how the early church rightly and positively dealt with an issue that was affecting the life of the community of the early believers, which if it had not been handled correctly, could have led to not only disunity in the church, but also inhibited the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus to many.

### **The Growth and Issue in the Early Church**

By Acts 6, we can see that the early church was really growing. (v.1) It all started on the day of Pentecost where "3,000 were added" (2:41), and then, believers were continually being "added daily" (2:47). After which, a further "5,000 men" were added (4:4), with "Multitudes of men and women" continuing to be added (5:14), until we reach (6:1). A rough estimation therefore of the number of believers by Chapter 6:1 could be between 12,000 and 15,000.

Amid this explosive growth, a complaint arose regarding a lack of care. (v.1b) The Hellenistic Jews (Jews who adopted the Greek language and culture and were generally from outside Israel), complained against the Hebraic Jews (Jews who followed more closely the Torah and were from inside of Israel) because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. In the midst of this issue, we must never forget that whether Hellenistic or Hebraic, both were Christians, followers of Jesus from a Jewish background, who had come to believe in and follow Jesus as their Master and Messiah.

While some commentators suggest this issue was initiated by Satan to stop the growth of the early church, and we acknowledge that Satan constantly wants to cause disruption and unhappiness so that the church will be distracted from its mission, we also want to consider that this issue of lack of care shown in the early church resulted from the realities of number of believers increasing exponentially over a short period of time. John Stott was right when he said, "*It is not suggested that the oversight was deliberate ... more probably the cause was poor administration or supervision*".

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## **Framework for Godly Response**

This episode provides valuable lessons for addressing disputes effectively not just for our church as a whole but also for our Life Groups, committees, ministries, families and even workplaces:

### **1. Dispute Acknowledged – between Parties (v.1)**

The early church did not ignore the complaint. The issue was a lack of equitable food distribution, which directly affected the Hellenistic widows. The dispute was initially expressed through murmurings, which the Greek word translated as “complaint” implies. The “complaint” was duly acknowledged and looked into by the Twelve leaders.

- Humility is essential when a “wrong” is being alleged or we will be defensive and not listen to those raising the issue. As a result of the case being rightly and humbly acknowledged, it allowed for discussions with the affected parties to be opened.

### **2. Discussions Held – with Parties led by the Leaders (v.2a)**

The Twelve disciples (with Matthias in place of Judah) led the discussions. As respected and established leaders of the church, they took responsibility for the acknowledged dispute.

- Discussion regarding a dispute in church should be led by people who have the maturity and wisdom if a right understanding of the issue and the best way forward toward a solution is to be arrived at; in order for a right and godly decision to be made. And so, we then have the 3 sub-parts following the discussions. Firstly, a

#### **2a. Decision Made – by the Leaders (v.2b)**

The apostles wanted to fulfil their primary duty of proclaiming the Word of God, with its related requirement of prayer. It was not a case where they felt they were too good to serve tables. With this, the Twelve were able to recommend the correct course of follow up action. And this was done with:

#### **2b. Duties Defined – between Apostles (Teaching and Prayer) and Deacons (Service) – character and faithfulness first for both (v.2b-4)**

The “this responsibility” referred to was the need for a proper daily distribution of food to all widows, and not just to some. There was and is no hint that the Twelve regarded this work of serving at the tables as inferior, or beneath their dignity. It was and is entirely a question of calling and privilege given by God, for as someone had rightly put it, God *“did not call the Twelve to be and do everything for the church. God was going to raise up others to serve the needs of the church.”*

- GODLY requirements needed for those to be chosen to take over the “responsibility” of food distribution and the waiting of tables – They needed to be *“known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom”*, that is, known to be disciples of Jesus who were faithful in their discipleship and known to be people of good

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Christian character, just like the 12 Apostles – mature and wise! Faithfulness and Character!

- Another way of putting it is that God is far more concerned with the internal quality of the person than their outward appearance or image. The selection of King David (when he was young) over his brothers stated in 1 Samuel 16:7, “*The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*”
- ALL ministries done for God and in the church are to be done by people who are “*known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*”, and not just those involved in the ministry of the Word and related prayer because the same Greek word is used for both distribution (Acts 6:1) and ministry (Acts 6:4) where the basic idea was that both places is service, whether in practical ways or spiritual ways.

## **2c. Delegation Done – ownership for solution of issue – more people serving (v.5)**

This was done pursuant to what the Twelve instructed in v.3, “*choose seven men from among you*”. But why 7 (and not 8 or 10) men to be selected? Possibly so that there would then be one person each day of the week to help oversee the proper distribution of food to the widows

- All the seven selected had Greek names, indicating that they were Hellenists themselves. This showed that the people were very sensitive to the offended Hellenists by appointing 7 of their own to help take ownership for the care of the distribution of food to the widows amongst them. This delegation was clearly well received by all as it was recorded that the “*proposal pleased the whole group*”.
- For a dispute to be settled in a godly manner, firstly, cooperation by both sides is a necessary step, and secondly, the wisdom of the leaders needed to be confirmed and affirmed by the people. And when this was done, more people started serving and doing the work of ministry which met the needs.

## **3. Divine Commissioning – for every act of service is sacred (v.6)**

It was important to lay hands on the seven persons (that is, dedicate them and seeking God’s blessings for and upon them) even if their service was mainly for meeting the practical needs of the widows. This is because for all acts of service in the church, it requires God’s enabling grace and power to be done, or carried out according to God will and values, and also in a manner that is honouring and glorifying to God alone.

## **4. Division Averted – unity preserved and growth continued (v.7)**

The first result of handling this problem with a Godly Response was that unity in the early church was preserved. And because the people were still united in purpose, as we saw

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earlier, the outflowing of this was that members, other than the Twelve, were given the opportunity to serve and be a blessing to the community of the early church.

The second result was that the word of God continued to spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly. It is worthy to note that the two words, “spread” and “increased” in Greek, are in the imperfect tense which indicates that both the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church were continuous.

And very significantly in the last part of v.7 is mentioned the following: “*a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.*” That is, more Jewish leaders started to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah that God had promised and so, put their trust in Him. And we can only imagine the impact this had on those coming to the Temple to offer sacrifices as they were now being told that Jesus was the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ, that God had sent, and that He was the perfect sacrifice for their sins and so, they should put their trust in Him. Is that not wonderful to hear? Praise God!

## **CONCLUSION**

The early church's handling of their dispute exemplifies a Godly Response using the framework:

1. **Dispute acknowledged**
2. **Discussions held**
  - a. Decision made
  - b. Duties defined
  - c. Delegation done
3. **Divine commissioning**
4. **Division averted**

May we learn from the early church how to handle disputes with A Godly Response as listed, and never by mere earthly wisdom or method. Then, will we, by God’s grace, contribute rightly toward the life, well-being, unity and growth of our church for her to remain united and the progress of the Gospel continued.

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# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

## **A. Review Sermon Application**

***Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.***

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
  - 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
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2. Since hearing the sermon, how have you been reflecting on responding to disputes or challenges in a godly manner?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

3. Read Acts 6:1-7 slowly and reflectively.
  - a. Rate yourself and your life group, 1 being least and 5 being most, in how godly you are in responding to disputes, disagreements or criticisms. Share the reason for the score given?
    - b. The Apostles were humble enough to acknowledge the dispute and dealt with it without being defensive.
      - (i) Do you listen to those who raise an alleged “wrong” without being defensive? Why or why not?
      - (ii) How would you define humility?
    - c. The Apostles were also very sensitive to the offended. What can you learn from this?
  
4. How do you define being “*known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*”? Why is it necessary for ALL ministries done for God and in the church to be done by people who are “*known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*”, and not just those involved in the ministry of the Word and related prayer?
  - a. How has knowing that even those serving tables need to be of high character and faithfulness impacted you?
  - b. Do you consider yourself to be “*known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*”?
  - c. What can you do and how can your group members help or encourage you to be “*known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*”?
  
5. What can your Life Group learn and apply from this sermon?

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## **C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action**

***Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.***

6. One of the outcomes of the godly response was that more people were roped in to serve in ministry. Share your testimony if you have witnessed this happening after a division had been averted.

OR

Give thanks to God for the examples we can learn from the early church because of His recorded Word and commit to reading His Word so that you can gain more wisdom from it daily.

7. As a group, humble yourselves before God to seek and obey the Holy Spirit's leading if there is a need to handle any disputes in your group using "A Godly Response" now. Pray also for our church that we will always avert division through a godly response so we may remain united and the progress of the Gospel continued.

### Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Behold the Lamb – Passion  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1QRtxUF50&ab\\_channel=PassionVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1QRtxUF50&ab_channel=PassionVEVO)
2. Holy Forever – Chris Tomlin  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkHgXKemCRk&ab\\_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkHgXKemCRk&ab_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO)
3. In My Life Lord Be Glorified – Bob Kilpatrick  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5bpU3hzMXs&ab\\_channel=EmmausMusic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5bpU3hzMXs&ab_channel=EmmausMusic)

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