

RAISED AND RELEASED

ESSENTIAL CHURCH: ACTS, PART 1 · ACTS 6:1-8 · OCTOBER 5, 2025 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food." (Acts 6:1)

Family Tensions (Acts 6:1)

- With all the good things, tensions still exist
- Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews: what is this tension?
- The biblical 'quartet of the vulnerable'
- The distinctive Christian approach to the vulnerable

A Potential Resolution (Acts 6:2-6)

- Bringing the problem to the family
- A potential resolution within the family
- Different types of "serving"
- Paying attention to the character of those raised up
- Paying attention to the names of those raised up

The Unexpected (or Expected?) Outcomes of Navigating the Tension (Acts 6:7-8)

- "The word of God spread"
- "The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly"
- Both the apostles and these new servants receive power from God

Living as God's Family in Step with the Holy Spirit

- To see
- To love
- To serve

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you been asked to do something that is beyond you? How did you grow through this experience (even if some challenges arose for you)?
2. This week we conclude our sermon series, "Essential Church," by looking at how the early church navigated tensions as an opportunity for ministry growth in Acts 6:1-8. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you, and then read that passage aloud.
3. Even as so many good things have happened with the church in Jerusalem, how would you summarize what the early Jesus community is facing according to verses 1-4?

4. Read Zechariah 7:9-10 as a reminder of the biblical calling to care for those in need. What captures your attention in these verses?
5. How do the apostles describe the character of the people they are looking for as part of the solution?
6. Why do you think character is significant in our sense of calling or vocation with God?
7. One thing to notice about the names of the people who are called in verses 5-6 is that they all have Hellenistic or Greek names, and that Nicolas from Antioch was "a convert to Judaism." Why might this be important as an answer to the rising tensions?
8. What is the outcome of the resolution of the tensions here, according to verse 7?
9. We will return to Stephen in our next series, "Ordinary People in God's Extraordinary Work," after MissionsFest, but what begins to happen through those who are raised up by the apostles in verse 8?
10. What is one thing God speaking to you personally through this week's study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and consider sharing your thoughts with someone this week.

DIG DEEPER:

Exploring Faith

- What might have happened to the church if the apostles had tried to fill the tensions out of their own capacities?
- How does seeing the reality of the early church, both tensions and solutions, impact your journey to understand and believe?

Growing in Faith

- Ponder the description of those who were being looked for: "known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom." In what ways might God be inviting you to grow in these areas yourself?
- Where are you serving presently? What might it look like to step forward in new ways of service beyond what you are comfortable for the glory of God?

Centered in Faith

- Who is someone in your sphere of influence who you might invite to take a step forward in faith and service for God's glory and mission?
- Consider exploring a further resource, such as *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life* by Erik Rees.

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