



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 1 - Number 9
The week of November 29, 2015

Church Health

Acts 6:1-7

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

Unity in Christ - We believe that everyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior has become one in Him.

The following is an article from Ray Hollenbach, a Chicagoan, who writes about faith and culture. He is also a husband, a father, a writer, a (former) pastor, a businessman, and a student of Jesus. Hollenbach has written about faith and culture for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, ChurchLeaders.com, SermonCentral.com, *Relevant Magazine*, My Faith Radio, and *Collide Magazine*. He has a Master's degree in theology from Campbellsville University, a degree in communications from Illinois State University, and currently lives in central Kentucky.

Psalm 133 (ESV)

¹Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ²It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! ³It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

With understated simplicity, God reveals something of his nature in just sixty-two words. He loves unity and bestows his blessing wherever he finds it. His very existence models unity before creation, unity before knowledge, and unity forevermore. Tim Keller calls it the "dance of reality" . . . the Creator of the universe is somehow three and also One. Unity is simply another way of saying "God is love."

We have trouble with this. We mistake uniformity for unity. We mistake intellectual agreement for unity. But there is no mistaking the oil of anointing in life lived together. There's no mistaking the refreshment of a saturated mountain-morning when God's kids learn how to play nicely together.

Here are seven starters, all from Paul's letter to a healthy church in a place called Ephesus. I will not give chapter-and-verse references because to do so would be to reduce the call for unity to mere Biblical argument.

- We are—all of us—adopted into God's family. This means we must learn a new way to live. We are called to take on a family identity that was previously alien to our way of thinking and acting. To carry our old ways into the new family of God is to refuse the new identity he gives us.
- Our eyes of our hearts must be enlightened, not the thoughts of our intellects. More than knowledge, we need the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.
- He wants to show us the "incomparable riches of his grace," but we frequently mistake the moment of adoption as the beginning and end of his grace. Having breathed the air of grace the first time, we think we received all there is. There is more grace to discover; it starts within the family of God and migrates outward.
- There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. If you're keeping score, that's seven "ones" and four "alls." Did you notice that the phrase "one creed" does not appear?
- We grieve the Holy Spirit not by what we teach or advocate but by how we treat one another.
- If we revere Jesus, we will submit to one another.
- "Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love." The greatest intellect of Christendom opened and closed his love-letter with the words grace and peace.

As you consider our unity in Christ, I ask you to think about how you have experienced this unity, how you have contributed to this unity, and how you may foster unity among the Body of Christ here at LCC!

This Week's Complementary Passage

Exodus 18 (ESV)

¹ Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. ² Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, ³ along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), ⁴ and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). ⁵ Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. ⁶ And when he sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her," ⁷ Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. ⁸ Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. ⁹ And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

¹⁰ Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹ Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people." ¹² And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

¹³ The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. ¹⁴ When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" ¹⁵ And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; ¹⁶ when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws." ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² 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. ²³ If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace."

²⁴ So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵ Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²⁶ And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. ²⁷ Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country.

Marking Guide for Acts
(not all words occur in the passage)

- appointed
- baptized
- Caesar
- enemy/demons/Satan
- eternal life
- fathers & children [in one color different from Moses]
- Gentiles
- gospel
- grace
- Holy Spirit
- in the name of Jesus Christ
- Jesus
- Jews
- Law [of Moses]
- men of the council
- Moses [in different color from fathers & children]
- prayer
- repent [repentance]
- resurrection [raised up]
- salvation
- suffering
- the Way
- the promise of the Father
- witnesses
- word of God

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STEP ONE . . .

READING what the passage says
(Read it at least three times)
Acts 6:1-7 (ESV)

¹ Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 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. ³ 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. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” ⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ 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.

STEP TWO . . .

OBSERVING how the passage moves

Return to the passage and **mark key words, phrases and movements:**

- Circle all of the words in this passage that speak of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, etc.).
- Underline the significant verbs/action words in this passage.
- In Acts 6:2, highlight the phrase “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.”
- In Acts 6:3, highlight the phrase “men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.”
- In Acts 6:4, highlight the phrase “we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
- In Acts 6:5, highlight the phrase “what they said pleased the whole gathering.”
- Highlight Acts 6:6.
- Highlight Acts 6:7.

STEP THREE . . .

Ask the five “W” questions and the one “H” question:

1. **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? And, to **whom** is it speaking?
2. **WHAT** is the subject of the passage? What does the passage say about the subject?
3. **WHEN** do or will the events occur? When did something happen to a particular person, people, or nation?
4. **WHERE** did or will this happen?
5. **WHY** is something said or mentioned? Why would or will this happen? Why at this time? Why this person?
6. **HOW** will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

STEP FOUR . . .

UNDERSTANDING what the passage means

This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

Commentary on Acts 6:1-7

6:1 - "Disciples." This term literally means "learners" and it is important to realize that the NT emphasizes "becoming disciples," not merely making a decision. This designation for believers is unique to the Gospels and Acts. In the Letters, the terms "brothers" and "saints" are used to designate the followers of Jesus.

"Complaint." This term means "to speak privately in a low voice" and points out that there was an undercurrent of discontent among the disciples.

"The Hellenists" refers to the Jews who grew up in the Diaspora and spoke primarily Greek.

"Hebrews" refers to believing Jews who were from Palestine and spoke primarily Aramaic. There were certainly cultural and racial overtones in this situation.

"Their widows were being neglected." This phrase indicates that the ones serving were favoring their own, the locals, no doubt unintentionally. This kind of thing naturally occurs in the absence of explicit planning and organization.

6:2 - "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables." This is not a disparaging word about serving, but the beginning of the sensed need for a division of responsibilities among the people of God. These were not offices, but delegated functions. Gospel proclamation must take priority over some needed ministries. The Apostles were uniquely called and qualified for their task. Nothing should take away from that task. This was not an "either/or," but a "both/and" situation.

6:3 - "Full of the Spirit." The filling of the Spirit has been mentioned several times in Acts, usually in connection with the Twelve and their preaching/teaching/reaching ministries. It denotes power for ministry. The presence of the Spirit in a person's life is detectable. There is evidence in attitude, actions, and effectiveness. The Spirit is needed for service as well as for preaching.

"Wisdom." There are two kinds of wisdom: the grasp of knowledge and judicious living. These seven men had both!

6:4 - "Devote ourselves" means to be steadfastly committed to something or someone.

6:5 - "Stephen," means "victor's crown." All of the "seven" had Greek names, but most Jews of the Diaspora had both a Hebrew name and a Greek name.

"Full of faith" originally meant a person whose feet were in a stable stance. It came to be used metaphorically for someone who was trustworthy, faithful, dependable, and loyal. This term is also used for the believer's response to God's promise through Christ. We trust His trustworthiness! Stephen trusted in God's trustworthiness; therefore, he was characterized by God's character (i.e. full of faith, faithfulness).

"Full of ... the Holy Spirit" implies that the person has entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ and that the person is led by the Spirit. It seems that one's "fullness" is related to one's continually being filled.

6:6 - "They prayed and laid their hands on them." These actions signify that the seven were dedicated to a particular ministry.

6:7 - "Multiplied greatly" is a central theme in the book of Acts. God's word is spreading by new people trusting in Christ and becoming a part of the new people of God. As "**a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith,**" it caused unrest among the Jewish leaders because of Christianity. Those who knew the OT well were being convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the promised Messiah. The inner circle of Judaism was beginning to crack!

SUMMARIZING the message

The book of Acts records how the early church exploded in growth over the first few months. For instance, in Acts 2 we are informed the church began with 3,000 new members. Acts 4:4 states that the number of men grew to 5,000. There could have been as many as 20,000 people in the church—counting women and children.

The growth was wonderful. But they soon discovered that explosive growth brought major challenges. In Acts 6 the church faces an overburdened benevolence program. While their primary purpose was to make as many disciples as possible, they also understood the church was to be a loving family that cared for one another. So they had a distribution program that provided food for elderly widows. But as their numbers grew, those who spoke primarily Greek complained of inequality and favoritism. They said that the Hebrew-speaking believers were getting most of the food and it wasn't fair.

The Apostles didn't ignore the problem. They encouraged the participation of the congregation and ultimately selected seven men full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit to manage the ministry, and they continued with their respective responsibilities. Here we see these leaders willing to involve the people of God to get the work of the church done. They teamed up with the congregation by letting them select the men. Then they confirmed the ones chosen by prayer and laying on of hands. The Apostles didn't allow this distraction to sidetrack them from their primary responsibility to pray and preach. It's not as if one responsibility was better than the other. Rather, Jesus called them to be Apostles, and that meant being devoted to their primary calling.

When the people of God are teamed up in the service of God, the Word of God will spread. In verse 7, Luke celebrates the Apostles' solution to this in-house problem. The word of God continued spreading. The number of disciples kept increasing. In fact, the solution resulted in a breakthrough in evangelistic power. Priests who had been hostile to the gospel were responding to the Word of God. The church had been tested. She had passed the test by caring for the widows and guarding the word. God honored this triumph with new power and fruitfulness. When the people of God are participating in the service of God then the Word of God will spread.

Growth means change. It means facing problems that threaten our unity and prayerfully considering new options. Are you willing to deal with the uncomfortable realities of growth? Are you willing to join in the service of God so the Word of God will spread?

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

Undiluted Worship *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

Desperate Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Total Forgiveness *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

Tangible Compassion *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

Generous Giving *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

God Space *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalm 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.

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