**Unstoppable - wk 7 - Growing Pains**

**Acts is Jesus: The Sequel. Luke Vol 2 - A narrative - the “what now?”**

**(Unleashed and unstoppable w/ purpose) Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**They began to experience marvelous miracles, supernatural growth, and unstoppable boldness in the face of intense persecution - but not everything was pleasant in house.**

**Today Chap 6 Growing pains - Remember having growing pains? Kids.**

**Three new challenges arise… Acts 6:1 - In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, (By thousands) the Hellenistic Jews among them complained (grumbled) against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. (Crisis / widows, welfare, and food distribution)**

**Good times, until the first fight. Remember the first fight when dating? Nikol and I still haven't yet - JK.)**

**Two Big Principles Up-front**

1. **Taking care of the needy begins at home**

**If we are going to serve and reach our community - we need to learn to do it first within our Christ community.**

**At the time few had greater needs than the widows (explain). They were committed to looking out after them.**

1. **A church doing all the right things will still have problems**

**Some think only churches not doing what they should, will have problems - this is a good example of just the opposite.**

**\*\* No perfect churches. Every church has problems. Even ours.**

**They were doing everything right - Satan was working overtime.**

* **Ananias & Saphira - through hypocrisy and arrogance.**
* **Persecution, threats to intimidate – with beatings/ jail.**
* **Now attempts to stir up strife and division inside.**

**Their growing Pains brought growing problems.**

**How do you handle people-problems? Run, ignore, blame, seek to solve or resolve - the Apostles chose to confront it.**

**Three Big Problems Every Church must face - with 1 Solution**

1. **The challenge of ethnic divisions - The first inner church problem was a disunity based on ethnic and economic lines.**

**6:1 …The Hellenistic Jews (Greek speaking Jewish converts - Jewish people raised in Greek culture and who spoke and lived like Greeks) among them complained against the Hebraic Jews (Israel born Jewish converts - Jewish people who spoke Hebrew/ Aramaic and followed Jewish customs) because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.**

**The Hellenistic Jews were feeling shut out by the Hebraic Jews**

**They were immigrants and most likely had little family help.**

**They did not feel their physical needs were being thought of.**

**The early church started out w/ over 16 diff people groups (Acts 2) - Talk about a bi-lingual church - now the first potential split is race related.**

**This is still a tool of the enemy - the church faces today. A scar on churches for years - a sin. Christ's Church should be where cultural, racial, or financial differences never matter! A church that has racist or elitist tendencies is an embarrassment to Jesus and His Kingdom. A tool of the enemy.**

**Every person who walks in looks for 2 things in people - Someone like them (I have a place) & someone diff than them (they welcome people diff from me) We should set the example. We want diversity - expect it.**

**(Now problem 2) Acts 6:2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.**

1. **The challenge of time management**

**Some read that and assume the apostles think they are too good to serve - The issue is not pride, but time - they wanted to make sure it was taken care of and that their primary calling was fulfilled too.**

**Realize, we all have a role to play, and everyone is essential**

**Romans 12 - we all have diff gifts and roles - we all function together.**

**1 Cor 12 - says we are like a body with diff functions and roles.**

**What is your role? FIT, sound, kids church, youth leaders?**

**(By doing something good, they were neglecting something important - and what they were doing was not being done efficiently - Apostles told them) Acts 6:3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”**

**Caring for the immediate needs of others is important – but it’s not the mission. Our mission is the great commission - Matt 28:19-20. Yes, feed and help the poor, but never as a replacement for the mission.**

**Acts 6:3b …We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”**

**Pastors 3 Primary Priorities**

* **Equip and delegate**

**They trained, prepared, and released to others into ministry. They equipped and released. More on this in a minute.**

* **Pray for the people they shepherd**

**Good leaders pray for God’s people - 10 out of 13 letters, Paul mentions praying for his readers, for the church / Exodus 17 - The army was victorious as long as Moses prayed for them. / Jesus - prayed for the disciples daily.**

**I love to pray for you - I believe God moves thru our prayers and He answers prayers - prayer affect us in ways untold.**

**From Nehemiah to Ezra / Jesus to Peter and Paul – we see pastoral leaders (shepherds) taking the initiative in calling and leading the people to prayer.**

* **Preach the Word of God**

**I get asked what do I do all week? I do admin, counsel, meet w/ people, disciple, manage the Vive - mostly I prepare the Word. I take this very serious - I preach like this is the only message you will ever hear - I pray during, after, and over it.**

**As your pastor - hear me - I prepare messages for you to grow and to help keep strong and advance the kingdom in your life. That's why is affects me so much when you miss - I'm thinking this is for you - you need this!**

**And it is a pastoral leader’s responsibility to teach God’s Word and advance the Kingdom of God. In this place and your life.**

**In order to do this, a pastor must commit to studying Scriptures / commit to thinking hard about their truths / meditating on them / learning to apply them to his own life and teaching them to others.**

**I have a prayer request - Pray for your pastor. Pray for my health, that I'll be strong and alert - humble & broken - that the fire of God would burns inside - that I'll rely on God and see his blessing in my family - that I would be led by the HS when I preach His Word!**

**Pray for me - not because I deserve it - but because I need it.**

1. **The challenge of properly caring for people**

**Point of the whole issue – we have people in need how can we love and care for those who need help in our body and stay on mission.**

**This is something churches struggle to do well. It is something Paul mentions it 1 Timothy 5 - gives specific instructions.**

**Acts 6:2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. (Diakonos - Deacon = servant) 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men (don't know why 7 - symbol of completion?) from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” (Solution to problem - unleash leaders)**

**1st time deacons are mentioned and chosen Deacon = servant**

**We are all called to serve – Serving is not an option in the Christian life. It is the Christians life.**

**But these are people who have been given leadership responsibility to lead and care for the church. Ministry leaders.**

**We see in our church as ministry leaders & Life Team leaders.**

**They are to - care for needy fellow believers, visit the sick, assist in spiritual growth. Practical servant leaders.**

**Pick not just anybody - but qualified people –**

**“from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.”**

**The qualifications of a deacon (servant leader)**

**FYI - Romans 16 / Phil 4 - Mentions women as deacons**

**Acts 6:3 full of the Spirit - The first requirement was truly saved - Spiritual**

**Confession in Christ and filled with the spirit of God. Are they truly born again? Do they love the Lord? Is Jesus King of their life? Do they display the fruit of the Spirit? Do they know thew Word of God? Spiritually minded and thinking. Are they led by the HS?**

**and Wisdom - The second requirement was maturity - Practical**

**They are to be a mature person. Do they know what their talking about? Do they have the ability to bring solutions? Do they have discernment? Do they know how to work w/ people?**

**Have common sense - not overly spiritual but practical too.**

**1 Timothy 3:8-13 - Deacons have respect, self-control, honest, live honorable lives, knowledgeable of and faithful to Biblical truth.**

**People of character and spiritual maturity**

**My 5 points of leadership (What I look for) Born again / lifestyle that says you're born again / Faithful / Teachable / Servant**

**They were to look for people who were spiritually growing (not tenure)**

**BTW - Spiritual growth does not - just happen - over time!**

**I know people in church over 30 yrs - that's just attendance**

**Spiritual growth happens when we intentionally pursue Jesus and seek to be Jesus to those around us. High and lows.**

**What if we were as intentional with God as we are with sports, work, vacations, hobbies... You might just change the world**

**The Apostles did not solve problems by doing it themselves - but by delegating, empowering and unleashing people to lead and serve.**

**Churches function in health when this takes place.**

**I can’t always be the one calling or showing up (I’ll try) What really blesses me - when I find out our LT leaders show up - organized a meal - met a need - cared for people.**

**We still have challenges that need solutions - we still have the poor and needy / widowed / orphaned / abused / sick / imprisoned. Deacons (servant leaders) are the people that organize and care for these.**

**Our limitations are not for lack of opportunities, but lack of leaders - This is both a spiritual and practical ministry.**

**Acts 6:5 This proposal pleased the whole group. (People rally behind a well-handled problem) They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. (Intentionally diverse group) 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Affirmed and prayed for by leadership - the laying on of hands done throughout the Bible.) 7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests (previously hard hearted) became obedient to the faith.**

**Notice the Results**

* **Unity replaced division**

**“5 This proposal pleased the whole group.” Intentional diversity brought unity. People and needs were effectively represented and met.**

* **God's Word increased**

**“7 So the word of God spread.”**

**When leaders are empowered, pastors are empowered & the teaching gets better. Delegation ensures the leaders have time & energy to lead.**

* **God's church grew**

**“7b The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly…”**

**When leaders are empowered people are cared for properly and the church grows. Even among the hard to reach Pharisees.**

**The power of church delegation, church volunteers, and leaders.**

**Ephesians 4:11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, (to empower and unleash) so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

**Four types of People that give me a - Pain the Neck**

* **Longnecks - you stick your head in, but only to critique, give ideas This person always has an opinion, but rarely a solution**
* **Rubbernecks - you see a need and look away from needs**

**This person act like they are not needed - and look away**

* **Turtleneck - you stay in your neck of the woods / world**

**This person hides from work and avoids showing up**

* **Bottlenecks - you expect the pastor to do it all**

**The bottle necked church - can never move forward**

**Chap 7 – Stephen / Chap 8 Philip - start out as servants - soon emerge as powerful preachers and leaders. But it started here - waiting tables.**

**Where will it start for you?**

**I started setting up chairs and gear - cleaning toilets - picking up messes - serving food - coming early, staying late - I did not start on a stage - but in back - and when needed, I still do.**

**\*\*\* Guest speaker next Sunday.**

**In 2 weeks - Stephen began to preach the gospel and perform miracles (Acts 7) he is arrested - starts preaching to his accusers – what follows is the first recorded Christian martyr. The Deacon Stephen.**

**Acts 7:54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. (Saul is officially introduced by name here - he was in charge) 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Stephen became the first martyr)**

**A few things about Stephen - from waiting tables to leading people**

* **He studied the Word - he knew and studied God's word**

**51 verses - he summed up the entire Torah and Jesus life**

* **He lived above accusation - They had to strum up false accusers**
* **He saw beyond the playing field - Stephen realized waiting tables was a reflection of true leadership - that the tables in this life is a preseason for the next - that everything we do here is a job interview for eternity**

**What follows after his death is dynamic dispersion (due to local persecution)**

**Suddenly people all over the region start hearing about Jesus - revival begins - All from one guy who raised his hand and said - I'll do it.**

**Guest speaker next week – Larry Bickel**