

Developing Leaders

Acts 6:1-7
August 24, 2008

Intro:

When was the last time you complained about a problem?

We're pretty good at complaining, aren't we? Most of it comes from within us, from what the Bible calls sin: our selfishness and desire for control, so that when things don't go our way, people don't do what we expect them to do, we don't get what we want- we start complaining. It's from within, and it's something we need to work on.

Yet at the same time, there are some things legitimately wrong outside of us as well; our world is full of problems. Things aren't perfect at work, in your apartment complex, in your marriage, in your friendships. Your boss is really controlling and unfair, your neighbor is really loud at inappropriate hours, your spouse really doesn't seem to understand, and your friends really do gossip. And, unfortunately, things aren't always perfect in the community of people we call the church. Yet, regardless of the problems outside of us, we can all control and choose how we respond. Will we be complainers, or will we be part of the solution?

Today we look at the first of many stories of problems in the early movement of the church. Through it, I hope we can realize that problems are not only normal, but problems are really opportunities- opportunities for God bring develop work in our lives and in the world. Let's read Acts 6:1-4.

Developing Churches will have problems.

The story starts with a group of people complaining, or more literally grumbling. This is not a good thing, really- Phil 2:14, 1 Peter 4:9 each talk about doing things without grumbling. There is a substantial problem though- one that doesn't necessarily warrant grumbling- but nonetheless one that needs to be addressed. The Grecian widows of the community- meaning those who were Jewish by blood but Greek in culture and language, were being overlooked in the daily distribution, or daily service- most likely referring to the giving of food- in comparison to the Hebraic widows- those who were Jewish by blood and Jewish in culture. This is a potentially serious problem, for two reasons: 1) it's being expressed at the moment as a cultural problem, which could lead to issues of discrimination, and 2) it involves the most vulnerable people in a community- the widows- who are dear to God's heart. And you just don't mess with those dear to God.

But if you take a good look- it seems that the problem may actually has another cause. The problem actually comes from the growth of the Christian community and the inability of the apostles to really handle this at the moment. People may be feeling like the slip through the cracks. And no one ever really likes to feel that.

All that to say- developing churches will inevitably have problems. It's normal, it's a part of the process. It's something we would be wise to get ready for in our hearts here at Ethnos, as we're anticipating continued growth here, and learn to emotionally expect and embrace. One group may feel overlooked- age group, or a spiritual-level group. It will happen.

But the problems can't remain. They do need to be fixed. And that is exactly what happens. And the cool thing is that it is fixed as new leaders are brought up.

Problems are brought up in developing churches, but it's good because it gives a chance for new leaders to be developed.

Note how this happens here- it offers some good pointers on how to solve group problems. The apostles call together all the disciples and begin a process of develop up new leaders.

4 things we can learn from them about leadership development:

1. Leaders have particular callings and limits. (v.2- "right" as being "pleasing God.")

This is why we need to keep developing leaders here- all leaders have limits, and existing leaders are usually filled to capacity and calling.

2. Leaders arise from among the people and the situations themselves. (v.3, and the Greek names of the people.)

The best leaders are from within, and those who have direct involvement in the situation or problem.

3. Leaders need to be like Jesus (v.3- good reputation, full of God, and truly servants- note all words used here for ministry are actually literally "service")

It's not about who has a louder voice or a better degree or a professional background. Those can be important. But the core issue is being like Jesus, being like a servant! Mark 10:45

4. Leaders are confirmed by others.

Both congregation and top leadership should confirm and bless the development.

Challenge:

- Do you see a problem in the church?
- Are you part of the solution, or just complainer?
- Is God calling you to develop as a leader to be part of the solution? Would you be willing to pray for it?

God uses these developing leaders to further develop His work.

The situation seems very successful in v.7

The situation is doubly successful because Stephen and Philip play crucial roles in the Gospel witness, Acts 6, 8.

Challenge:

What is your call?

- Talk with your CG leader
- Sign up for Formatio.
- Commit yourself to God.