

"PRINCIPLES FOR GROWING CHURCHES"

(Acts 6:1-6)

(Chuck Swindoll)

The challenges faced by the rapidly growing church in Jerusalem suggest four principles that still apply today.

First, *strong leaders don't guarantee an absence of problems*. You may have strong, capable leaders who are filled and led by the Holy Spirit, but in a growing church you're still going to have some problems. Remember those who lead the church in those early days? Twelve apostles trained by Jesus for years, eleven of them under the close, personal supervision of the Messiah! Yet problems still challenged the church.

Don't blame leaders when difficulties arise. Blaming is easier than participating in the solution, but it does nothing to eliminate the problem.

Second, *rapid growth doesn't excuse unmet needs*. Now, that's a lesson for today's leadership to remember. These men in leadership listened to a legitimate complaint and then did something about it. They didn't defend themselves against the accusation of favoritism. They didn't ignore the problem as something beneath their level of concern. They didn't dismiss or minimize the need, and they certainly didn't discredit the people complaining. They listened to the criticism and then saw it as an opportunity to address an unmet need.

Third, *concerned involvement doesn't require losing priorities*. The apostles found a way to meet the congregation's needs and solve the problem without sacrificing their top priorities. That's a tough balance to maintain! It takes creative thinking, willingness to flex, courage to delegate, and the wisdom to risk failure. Welcome to Leadership 101.

Fourth, *a large church can have an effective ministry*. In fact, smaller churches cannot manage some ministries. I'm not saying one is better than another. I simply maintain that both small and large churches have their advantages. Smaller churches don't struggle with many of the dangers effecting large churches. Nevertheless, if the leaders of the large church can steer around those perils, they can minister to people who would otherwise lack what they need. A large church can minister to special needs children, brain-injured veterans, and people who were deaf, blind, or disabled using resources unavailable to churches with a small budget.

When God gives increased to the congregation, He doesn't leave it without direction. If the churches leadership, through prayer and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, take care to avoid the perils of success and diligently applies these principles, its leaders can keep the church strong *and* maintain a pattern of growth.

