

Series: How Jesus Acts Through Us Today; Sermon: **Growing Up in Lockdown**; delivered by **Josh Moody**, senior pastor, on May 3, 2020

**Bible text explored: Acts 6:1–7**

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup>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. [ESV]

**Review and application:**

*Some await a lifting of the pandemic lockdown to resume spiritual growth that has been on hold. Instead, Pastor Moody suggested, we should see this as part of an ongoing drama. (Think of how John Bunyan portrayed that drama in his classic 17<sup>th</sup>-century allegory, Pilgrim’s Progress, with its Slough of Despond, Vanity Fair, and Doubting Castle en route to the Celestial City.)*

1. Pastor Josh referred to *Romans 5:3-5* as an apt description of how the spiritual growth drama unfolds. What aspect of this Scripture can you identify with now?

*Today’s passage describes how the early church faced up to conflicts and resolved them, leading to ongoing fulfillment.*

2. What (*verse 1*) was the positive context for the rumblings of discontent?  
What differing backgrounds could easily divide the expanding church?  
What specific complaint surfaced?  
How was identifying the relevant circumstances, history, and perceived problem, essential to arriving at a solution?
3. A realistic review of roles (*verses 2-6*), helped the twelve [apostles] to clarify the conflict. What primary spiritual roles did they retain for themselves?  
What material role did they see as better delegated to others?
4. What qualities were essential for the seven to be selected by the church?  
What about the ones chosen made clear that the protesters would be treated with sympathy and respect?  
How did the twelve confer full authority on the seven?
5. The resolution of this problem put the church back on track for continued growth (*verse 7*). How was gospel proclamation affected?  
How was serious discipleship expanded?  
Why was the conversion of priests especially noteworthy?  
(See *Hebrews 10:11-14, 18*.)

6. How do external conflicts that flare up often mask internal conflicts?

Are these, in turn, often ultimately conflicts with God? (See *Jeremiah 9:23-24.*)

*In his book Knowing God, J. I. Packer said, "Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord."*