

Growing Through Crisis

In the beginning of Chapter 6, we see an event that could have been considered the early forms of a disaster for the church. The new believers, who were just described as being united in spirit, began to complain against each other, as the Hellenists believed their widows were being neglected by the Hebrews. However, as we see in this passage, every crisis is also an opportunity to improve. While there were grumblings of discontent among the church, the apostles viewed this as the perfect time to choose new leaders to deal with the current situation and need. When you're faced with a problem, it's usually an opportunity to learn or grow. We see this principle in our family, business, church, workplace – everything! This unique perspective of a "crisis" enables to see how Jesus can be made much out our situation. When conflict and strife could have led to disaster, the tables were turned to create the first organization of godly leaders to serve the body of Christ.

1. What are some examples of the "crises" that you experience in different areas of your life – within your family, relationships, and workplace?
2. Is your initial reaction to view these as opportunities for failures or growth? How does this perspective affect your response to the crisis?
3. How would the experience and possibly the outcome of the situation change if you viewed it as an opportunity to better yourself or others, like the apostles in this passage?
4. How does your relationship with God and your mission to serve Jesus fit into how you view, approach, and handle a crisis?

Your Specific Mission

In this situation, it would have been extremely easy for the twelve to please the Hellenists by agreeing to solve the situation themselves. Instead, the apostles realized that this calling was better performed by other men in the church. It wasn't that this task was "below" the apostles, but it inhibited them from doing what they did best – preaching the Word of God. At the same time, the seven men chosen to serve did not spend time envying the mission that God had given the apostles. Instead, they focused on their specific purpose at hand, honored to take any role in serving Christ by aiding in the advancement of His Kingdom. In the same way, we must realize the specific gifts and purpose-driven mission that God has placed inside each and every one of us. A helpful way to understand our calling in life is to use the SHAPE acronym:

Spiritual Gifts - A set of special abilities that God has give to you to share his love and serve others.

Hear - The special passions God has given you so that you can glorify him on earth.

Abilities - The set of talents that God gave you when you were born, which he also wants you to use to make an impact for him.

Personality - The special way God wired you to navigate life and fulfill your unique Kingdom Purpose.

Experiences - Those parts of your past, both positive and painful, which God intends to use in great ways.

1. Take some time to examine the acronym of "SHAPE". What specific mission do you believe God has placed inside of you?

The Big Picture

In verse 7, we see the end result of the apostles' important decision to appoint seven leaders to handle the task of waiting on tables: "The Word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith." If the Hellenists, Hebrews, and apostles had continued to stay caught up in the current conflict, the end result would never have been the same. In the same way, had any of the groups become envious of the other, they would have been derailed from the mission at hand. In today's culture, it's very easy to get caught up in daydreaming what we wish we could do or accomplish, all while missing out on the current opportunity that God has placed before us that has the potential to have an eternal impact for His glory. The eternal impact of the decision made in this chapter was growth in early believers. What could the eternal impact of your current situation be?

1. Are there ever any times when you're envious of another person or desire in your life?
2. What does this say about your faith in what God is doing in and through you? Do you truly believe that God desires to use you to make an impact?
3. Do you ever long for the "spotlight role" in a situation like the apostles' teaching in this passage? Do you believe your "waiting on tables" role can still have an eternal impact like that described in verse seven?
4. Considering your current situations in your family, relationships, workplace, or community, what purpose does God desire to accomplish through you right now?
5. Is it possible that God may be using your current situation to prepare you for a bigger purpose-driven mission later in your future? Are you currently experiencing a moment like this?

Prayer Focus

- That we would view every opportunity in our life as an opportunity to learn and grow according to the mission that God has called us to
- That we would begin to realize the purpose-driven mission that God has placed inside of us and the spiritual gifts that He has given us to accomplish all that He has planned
- That we would start to realize the bigger picture in every situation that we encounter, as God continually desires to make an eternal impact through us