

Title: Times are a-changin // **Scripture:** Acts 6:1-7

ARRIVAL / SOCIAL TIME *15-20 minutes*

Spend the first 15 minutes or so of your time together catching up and socializing with one another. Also find time to catch up together on how the assignments from last week turned out.

SERMON REVIEW *5-10 minutes*

There are no perfect churches. Even the early church wasn't perfect. This week as we study Acts 6 together, we catch the early church in the midst of all kinds of changes and challenges. As the church increased in its number of people it also increases in its number of problems. The advancement of the church leads to adversity. Extraordinary generosity is threatened by fearsome selfishness. Marvelous wonders are met with jealous opposition. Angelic deliverance is coupled with physical beating. Indefatigable rejoicing is met with prejudice. These problems come from outside the community and from within. And while the problems that come from the outside often leads to the church's growth, it's the problems that come within that threaten its entire existence. Thankfully, God gives the church the answer to deal with many of their problems—and his answer might shock you. The problems of the church are solved by the raising up of the church's people—common people, like us, who root ourselves in the Word and let God do His extraordinary work in and through us.

THE MAIN THOUGHT *keep this in mind as you facilitate discussion*

Increase brings change and change creates challenge. But the answer to the challenging problems present in our community is found in the raising up of God's people.

SEE IT – Questions *10-15 minutes*

Picture (What is the story saying?): How would you describe the picture of the early church that we have read about in the first six chapters of Acts? Was it perfect? Explain. How did the increase of people coming into the church create problems? What did those problems look like? What was the specific problem addressed in Acts 6? What was the church's response to these problems?

Mirror (Where am I in the story?): Do you ever find yourself "looking" for the perfect community? What unfair expectations do you think you bring to the communities you find yourself in? What would it look like for you to do more than identify the community's problem but instead become part of the community's solution?

Window (How does the story change how I see those around me?): If the church is dependent upon its people, what do you think it looks like to be a leader in the church? How does Acts 6 affect your thoughts on what leadership looks like? What would it look like for leadership development to be normal in a church? How might you increase your leadership this year at Grace?

BE IT – Practice

Change UP // Quiet Time *15 minutes*

One of the ways that we grow as leaders is by spending time in the Word. Take some time to share what each of you has learned in your own quiet time with God this week. Also take some time to talk through what a personal time with God might look like for those who might not know how to grow in the Word for themselves.

Change IN // Table Talk *5 minutes*

This week Jon challenged us to think about the power of the Word and the power of the Table—that both are important and that each place of service depends on the other. Pass out a piece of paper to everyone in the group and give them seven minutes to write a note of encouragement to someone they have seen serve in either the Table or the Word this week with in our church family. Open the group for those who want to share their letters by reading them aloud or summarizing them for the group. Then thank God together for those whom God is using in our community. Encourage your group to hand their letters to those they wrote them about sometime this week.

Change OUT // Taste Test *5 minutes*

Jon reminded us this week that every community has places of bitter taste in it—places that threaten the sweet taste of the community life that is thriving. One of those places is in how we treat people from different races, cultures, backgrounds, and classes than ourselves. Take some time in your group to pray for issues of racism and classism that our nation is facing right now by joining hands as a symbol of unity in the midst of diversity.