

Unified in Mission: Overcoming Setbacks

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Date: 27 August 2023

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[0 : 00] Let's look together this morning in God's Word at Acts chapter 6 verses 1 through 7 this morning. Acts chapter 6 and verses 1 through 7.

The early church has been rocking along and it has been growing dramatically. A sin issue in the church was dealt with by God.

And then now another issue crops up that was threatening the unity in the body of Christ. Read with me the situation and the solution in Acts chapter 6 verses 1 through 7 beginning with verse number 1.

Now in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists.

Because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables.

[1 : 11] Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude.

And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith in the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles.

And when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Pray with me as we ask God to bless the, not only the reading of His Word, but as He would guide us in the study of His Word this morning.

Father, this morning we ask that You would be with us as we spend time in Your Word today, that You would help us to understand how to deal with situations and problems that will arise within Your body, within the local church.

[2 : 20] And we ask that You would help us as we look for solutions to continue to be unified in our mission that You have left us with. We thank You.

We praise You. For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. A thriving church had two great initiatives underway. First, the congregation had become outwardly focused.

They were praying and they were going. Secondly, there was a major remodeling that was going on in the church.

The church facilities, they knew that their old building was not adequate for the post-pandemic world. There was a lot of excitement, participation was high, and the church was growing.

They had a steady stream of guests coming in every Sunday and participating in worship. And then it stopped. The pastors and the elders called church answers for a consultation.

[3 : 25] They were wanting to know what in the world had happened and why growth within the church had stopped. Well, it didn't take long for the team to find out the answer.

The church was reconfiguring its worship center and its foyer. They needed a larger welcome center, a larger social area where people could congregate and fellowship prior to and after their worship services.

And so they reduced the seating capacity of their worship center and enlarged the foyer and the lobby area. The church's average attendance, they reduced it from 500 to 400 in their seating.

Now, there was 300 in average attendance, and these were meeting in two services on each Sunday morning. So they had plenty of space. And as the church continued to grow, they could simply add more services as they needed to accommodate the growth.

In the interview with the church members, what they found was a lot of excitement from the folks that were involved in the Pray and Go initiative. They were outwardly focused.

[4 : 39] They were excited about sharing their faith, sharing the gospel, and praying for their community. But for those involved in the renovation project, the attitude was almost the opposite, and some were even angry.

The main sticking point was in the remodeling of the worship center. While they were remodeling the worship center, they were meeting in the family life center.

And so they were having to, and the pews had been removed. And so they were deciding, do we go back with chairs, or do we go back with pews, or do we go with chairs?

Well, no one anticipated the emotions that resulted. As a matter of fact, the controversy was so great that it became known as the pews versus chair argument.

Well, during this time, in the meantime, the growth of the church had come to a standstill. The steady flow of guests each Sunday stopped or just came down to a slow trickle.

[5 : 50] It was a huge setback for the church. Disunity affected their kingdom effectiveness. No church is immune from problems.

No church has the, no church is perfect, and, excuse me, we have to understand that since we are human beings, and since we all have a fallen human nature, when we gather together, there are going to be issues, there are going to be problems, there are going to be conflicts.

That is just part of who we are. We're prone to have disagreements in the body of Christ and conflict in the church. I mean, it's a given.

If you can find a perfect church, do not attend it. Because the moment that you begin attending it, it will no longer be perfect. Why?

Because we're all fallen creatures, and we are always going to potentially have some conflicts, have some problems that happen.

[7 : 05] The early church had a situation that threatened not only their unity, but it threatened their effectiveness and the effectiveness of their mission.

And so we have to understand that their entire mission was threatened, and this was an important issue. We should not let setbacks set us back.

Let me say that again. We should not let setbacks set us back. As a matter of fact, say that with me. We should not let setbacks set us back.

In light of that, what do we do when it happens? I mean, think about that. It's an issue that we all have to deal with. What happens when something crops up, and it threatens our unity, and it threatens how we relate to one another?

Well, this passage this morning that we're in, in chapter 6 and verses 1 through 7, answers that by showing us how the early church responded to a problem that threatened their unity by accepting a solution that tackled the problem.

[8 : 20] And they allowed their unity to be restored so the gospel could move forward. Let's begin by looking at the problem. Let's look at verse number 7.

Then the word of God spread. We have seen this going on all through. Let's go back to verse number 1.

Now, in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, we have seen all the way through the first five chapters that people were being saved, people were coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the day of Pentecost, the church just ballooned in size. Every day, people were coming to know Jesus as their Savior.

So now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, and we'll explain what that means, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

[9 : 28] So the early church is presented with a problem that threatened their unity. And as we saw in the previous chapters, the church was growing daily, but with growth comes potential problems.

As the size began to grow, there were issues that would crop up, and that is not abnormal. As a matter of fact, in every growing church, there are always going to be growing pains.

And in every growing church, there are going to be situations that crop up that require a solution, and it maybe requires a change that will accommodate the solution to the growth issue.

That is not uncommon. And that's the reasons why some don't want their church to grow, because they don't want to change. They don't want to see people come to... Now, they don't admit that. But they don't want their church to grow, because if the church doubles, now all of a sudden, you'll have a whole lot of people that you don't know.

And you're going to have to change the way you do things, because you can't do things like you used to do, because now you've got more folks to deal with. So a certain group within the church began grumbling.

[10 : 45] The dispute began, it says in verse number 1, against the Hebrews by the Hellenists. The Hebrews were those Aramaic-speaking Jews who were from Jerusalem, those who were born there, those who were locals.

And then you remember the day of Pentecost, Sabbath, people came from the nations around. They were Jews, but they were speaking other languages.

And so the Hellenist is another word for anything that is Greece-related, Greek-related. And so these were Greek-speaking Jews who had come, they got saved, and they stayed.

So the church was made up primarily of Jews from Palestine who spoke Aramaic and Hebrew.

And then there was probably a smaller contingency of new believers who were Greek-speaking. And the Hellenists, the Greek-speaking, had decided that, or had realized that their widows were not being taken care of.

[11 : 59] So the complaint was that the Greek-speaking widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. And as we know, it's the church's responsibility to take care of its members.

The widows had lost their source of income. And so they needed taken care of. So there were, the apostles were taking care of, making sure that the widows were being fed.

The fact that the outsiders were being neglected created a situation that could have divided the church. It was a potential problem.

Now the word neglected that we see in verse number one, or the Greek word used here, literally is overlooked. It was probably not on purpose.

They, it was not intentional, and it wasn't direct. The, the, the, the situation was, the busy apostles hadn't given the responsibility to anyone else.

[13 : 04] The apostles were doing so much. They were leading the church. They were, they were teaching the church. They were making sure that everything was, uh, being taken care of.

Excuse me. So these widows were simply slipping through the cracks. But this could have grown into a serious problem. It's an age-old problem of prejudice.

And it was a cultural problem. These outsiders didn't act like, didn't talk like, and didn't live like the locals. And so, it's very possible that they may have been treated like second-class citizens.

Those who come in to a fellowship or those who move into a community, the locals sometimes view them with suspicion.

And sometimes, uh, as a new folk, you have to kind of break into, uh, to the group. And you, you still maybe feel like an outsider for a while.

[14 : 06] It happens. It happens everywhere. That's simply human nature. Uh, but as we've seen earlier, the believers truly loved one another. You remember that? They were selling their, their, their goods.

They were selling property when they needed to. They were taking care of one another because they really did love one another. But, we, they had an issue that could have, uh, that could have divided them.

They realized that this communal style of living really wasn't working as well as they thought. And that's what we see in every society that tries to live this way.

the human, the, the, the old human nature crops up. And the Grecians, who evidently were a minority group, felt neglected and demanded that their widows be given equal treatment.

And that's when they decided to come to the apostles. Well, the church had a problem. The question is, how do we respond when a perceived problem arises within the church?

[15 : 10] Do we grumble and complain among ourselves? We hope it goes away or we hope it gets taken care of somehow.

Or do we stop complaining and we go to the person or the persons that can take care of it? all too often people grumble, people complain, oh, I can't believe that's happening.

I can't believe they overlooked me. I can't believe that this did, and I, oh, and people commiserate with one another before you know it, then people have a bad attitude and people begin to drop out of the church because of a bad attitude.

when all they had to do was simply go to the person or persons that could do something about it. And you know the reality?

Nine times out of ten it wasn't a problem and it wasn't intentional. And if they would have just said something about it to the person who could have done something they would have said, oh, I'm glad you brought that up.

[16 : 23] We didn't realize that that was taking place or we didn't realize that was an issue. Well, let's see what we need to do to fix it. Wasn't that so simple? And that's what we see happening here.

There was a problem that threatened the church's unity so it was brought to the attention of the apostles and the apostles prescribed a solution to take care of the problem and it tackled the problem.

The apostles studied the situation. Okay, so you brought us a situation your Greek speaking widows are seeming to be overlooked and they're maybe not getting as much food or they're not getting the same attention that the local widows are getting.

So let's see what we need to do. And the apostles concluded that they were to blame. The apostles blamed themselves because they realized they were doing too much and they hadn't given the responsibility to anyone else.

They hadn't appointed anyone to handle these matters so they simply slipped through the cracks. So let's take a look at verse number two. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

[17 : 46] Now we get a little bit more clarification in the New Living Translation. So the twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said we apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God and not running a food program.

Well if you look at the word tables in verse number two it could mean a table like we had yesterday where we served food we sat at the table we ate hamburgers we ate hot dogs.

But that word table also could refer to remember when Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers the money tables that could also refer to that the money table or to the bank where the money was kept.

So probably the word tables here was used to refer to the place where the funds and the supplies were kept and administered to the widows. So in effect it was the food bank.

And so the apostles said we have other priorities than simply taking care of the food bank. The apostles were simply too busy to do everything.

[18 : 59] They were serving by doing the physical work. Diakonane the Greek word that's used here to render assistance or to help by performing certain duties.

very often it was a menial task that the word diakonos or diakonane referred to to serve to render to service or to help.

Now I want you to understand that word that they used doesn't mean that they were saying that the work was beneath them. The apostles were not saying we shouldn't be cleaning bathrooms.

We shouldn't be serving food. We shouldn't be taking care of the food bank because we've got more important things to do. They weren't doing that at all.

I believe what they were simply saying was this was a task. This is a service and we do have a priority but this is not any less important than what we are doing because think about it.

[20 : 03] If the distribution of food was not taken care of it could have split the church and it could have been a situation that rendered their effectiveness, their gospel effectiveness in the community and brought everything to a standstill.

So the key idea here I believe is that ministry is ministry. Whether you're cutting the grass, whether you're working the food bank, whether you are operating the help fund, whether you are teaching a Sunday school class, whether you are teaching children, whether you are preaching a sermon, or leading the church, ministry is ministry because really all ministry is service.

When an elder leads, it's service. An elder leads by leading and others serve by serving. And so it's all together.

So I don't believe the apostles were saying this is beneath us and we don't want to do it because this is not something that we ought to be doing. You know, we tend to use a passage like this and make distinctions.

You know, this is a job for, and I hate these words, but this is a job for the laity and this is a job for the clergy. And you know, there have been so many distinctions that have been made and I could name a whole bunch.

[21 : 26] the Lord's Supper. Where does it say in the Bible that a preacher has to administer the Lord's Supper? Where does it say in the Bible that a pastor has to baptize someone?

Nowhere. Matter of fact, pretty much I believe that a New Testament, if you led someone to the Lord, it was your responsibility to baptize them. There was nothing that ever said that, you know what, it's modern church that says this is a job for the clergy.

So we tend to make distinctions that the Bible never made. So this was simply a service that they said needs to be done and we are busy doing this and we don't want to be the reason why these widows are being neglected.

So yes, teaching and praying and leading the church took priority for them, but all the disciples needed to do something. See, God calls different people to different service.

God calls different individuals to different types of service. We all have different spiritual gifts. Some are leading, some are administration, some are gifts of mercy, some are gifts of help, some are gifts of service, but it's important to be faithful to whatever God has called you to do.

[22 : 52] D.L. Moody used to say that it was better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men. Don't work yourself silly. Get some other people involved.

And that's why we have our ministry teams. Because it's not up to one person, it's not up to three people or four people to do everything. It's let's divide the work, put ten men to work, put thirty people to work rather than doing the five people doing the work of thirty people.

And I think the apostles realized this. But they still have the problem of discord. When a church faces serious problems, this presents the leaders and the members with a number of opportunities.

For one thing, problems give us an opportunity to examine our ministry and discover what changes need to be made.

in times of success, it's easy for us to maintain the status quo. But this really is dangerous.

[24 : 00] When we are successful, when we're growing, when things are happening, there's always that potential for us to say it's always going to be like this. And we go on autopilot.

But that's a dangerous thing because we always need to be seeing what needs to be done. As a matter of fact, Henry Ward Beecher called success last year's nest from which the birds have flown.

Success is like last year's nest. There ain't no birds left in it. And success is fleeting. And so we always need to be examining our lives, examining our ministry.

What course, what mid-course corrections do we need to make? Any ministry and any organization that thinks that success will go on automatically is headed for failure.

See, we have to regularly examine our lives, regularly examine our ministry. So the apostles, they studied the situation and they gave the responsibility to others.

[25 : 01] Let's take a look at verses 3 and 4. Verse 3 says, Therefore, brethren, this was their solution, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

They gave the recommendations on what to look for. They needed to be full of the Spirit. They needed to be controlled by God's Holy Spirit, not controlled by their fleshly nature, not carnal, but spiritual and full of wisdom because they needed to be able to navigate all of these human needs that were presented to them.

So they needed to be wise in how they administered or how they took care of the needs of the body of Christ. But also, they had to be known for these things.

In other words, the previous two qualities had to be their reputation. So they had to have a reputation of being Spirit-filled and also being full of wisdom.

So they said, seek these seven men out whom we may appoint over this business, over this task, and so they can take care of the food bank and administering the food.

[26 : 25] They said, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. And the church listened to them, and they implemented the idea.

Look at verses 5 and 6. Verse 5 says, and the saying pleased the whole multitude. That sounds like a great idea. Thank you, men.

We are going to do just that. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith, and the Holy Spirit, Philip, Proculus, Nicanor, Timon, or Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch.

Church problems also give us an opportunity to exercise our faith. Not only our faith in God, but our faith in one another. Where did the solution lie?

Within the body. Did they have to go out and hire someone to come in? Did they have to go out and hire Cisco and come and feed their folk?

[27 : 25] No, they didn't have to do that. You know, they didn't go out and call a caterer. No, they said, the answer lies within our body. And so they chose these seven men.

And so they also had enough faith in themselves, in one another, to set these men over the situation. The problems, so first of all, problems give us the opportunity to exercise our faith.

Secondly, problems give us the opportunity to exercise love. I know these names don't mean anything to us as English speakers, but if you look at these names, all of these names were Greek names.

I want you to let that sink in for a moment. Who were the ones that were complaining? The Greek speaking folks within the church, and they said, our widows are not being taken care of properly.

Our widows are being overlooked. And I want you to get this. Probably the majority Aramaic Hebrew Jews chose seven men who were in the other camp.

[28 : 51] And I hate to say, I had to put it that way, but they chose seven people who had Greek names to take care of not only the Greek speaking widows, but also their Hebrew and Aramaic speaking widows.

So here's what they did. They trusted the outsiders to take care of the problem. What an illustration of Romans chapter 12, verse 10, giving honor and preference to one another.

And Philippians chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, not looking on their own interest, but for the interest of others.

What a beautiful picture of love and mutual care within the body of Christ. See, when we solve problems within the church, we must not think of ourselves, but others.

We should not think of ourselves only, but others. Solving church problems is not about preferences. Let me say that again. Solving problems within the body of Christ is not about preferences.

[30 : 06] They were willing to throw their own preferences out of the window so that they could do what was best for the body of Christ.

Matter of fact, he said, we love each other so much that you guys pick out who you want and we will be okay with it.

And so they threw their preferences out the window and they said, we trust you enough that you'll take care of our widows as well. So they wanted the whole body to be taken care of.

Now that'll preach. Amen! I was waiting for somebody to give me an amen. So they said, it's not about me. It's about us. It's not about me.

It's about us. Now before we leave this section, I know that people commonly call these men in Acts chapter 6 deacons.

[31 : 04] Because the Greek word diakonos, diakonane, was used in verse number 1. It was used in verse number 2. But they weren't actually called deacons.

The word that was used, they weren't called deacons. They just said that they were going to serve. Diakonos, diakonane, just simply words for serving and service.

It probably became official a little bit later. We find deacons mentioned in Philippians chapter 1 verse 1. Their recommended qualities are also mentioned in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verses 8 through verse 13.

The word simply means a servant. These seven men were humble servants within the body of Christ, men whose work made it possible for the apostles to do their work and take care of their responsibility, carry on their ministries among the people.

So these servants' main task, these men who were called to operate the food bank, their main task was to take care of the material needs and so relieve the apostles for their spiritual ministry of teaching and leading the church.

[32 : 28] So that was their responsibility. And in verse number 6, what did they do? Whoever that was set, these seven men were set before the apostles and when they had prayed, they laid hands, excuse me, they laid hands on them.

When the apostles put their hands on them, it meant that now these men would be partners with them. They would be partners in the work.

Now, what you understand, there was no woo-woo stuff that took place when they put their hands on their heads. It was not like something dramatic happened. Laying on of hands, you remember the Old Testament when once a year the priest put his hands on the goat and sent him out into the wilderness?

That simply, that was, that laying on of hands was simply a symbol that we're placing our guilt upon this animal and that they set it loose and that was just a picture of our sins being set loose that one day would be set loose when Jesus Christ would be on the cross.

So they laid hands and that was just a symbol, a picture that we are giving them this responsibility. Officially, they will take care of meeting the needs of these widows and that's what happened.

[33 : 51] It shows that these men were set aside for this task and commissioned to do the ministry. Now, I'm pretty sure the apostles weren't forming a new church office at this time.

I'm pretty sure in their minds they were just taking care of a problem and they said, you guys take care of this and as the needs grew, they took on more responsibilities and eventually, I believe, it became an official position, if you will, an office within the church.

Excuse me. They were simply solving a problem as the Holy Spirit led them. The early church was not afraid to change its structure in order to take care or to make room for a growing ministry.

When structure and ministry conflict, this gives us an opportunity to trust God for the solution. It's tragic when churches destroy ministry because they refuse to modify their structure when it becomes necessary.

It's the, we've always done it that way phenomenon. phenomenon or, and it becomes since we've always done it this way, then it must be the best way.

[35 : 09] Well, it may have been the best way 40 years ago or it may have been the best way at an earlier stage in our ministry but it may no longer be the best way and the early church understood that.

The apostles realized that. In a growing church, they needed to make changes and their structure was fluid enough to make room for the new growth that was taking place.

So they took care of it. The apostles weren't afraid to share their authority. They weren't afraid to share their ministry. So the early church always seemed ready to adjust its organization to meet the needs.

We tend to get so locked into structure and a traditional way of doing things that we often bypass needs that need to be taken care of. and we don't have any process in place to handle it.

In the New Testament church, structure always developed to meet new needs. The church continued to develop and change as it was required to meet new needs.

[36 : 18] As the needs changed, so did the structure. So how will we respond? How will we respond to growing pains? We should not let setbacks set us back.

Say that with me. We should not let setbacks set us back. Instead, let's rely on the Holy Spirit. If someone comes to you and if you're a ministry director and they say, you know what, we got a situation that I think we have a problem.

Well, let's not let it rest and hope it goes away. Let's take care of the problem. And so let's restore the unity so that we can continue moving forward.

Let's look to the Holy Spirit, which I believe is what the apostles did. They looked to the Holy Spirit to take care of a problem that came about and move forward. The early church did. What do we see going on?

Look at verse number seven. Then, they had a problem. They didn't just grumble and complain.

[37 : 23] They went to someone. They went to the ones who could do something about it. We have an issue. Okay, let's look at it. Here's the solution. Here's the potential solution.

Choose seven men who have, full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, and have a reputation for that and set them over this responsibility. The church said, that sounds great, and they did it.

What was the result? Then the word of God spread. Now, the word here literally means the word of God continued spreading. And the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

God's message continued to spread. Unity is restored. and the gospel moved forward. God is always exalted in the church that is unified around the mission.

A number of years ago, God called a young man to open a, excuse me, a number of years ago, God began to open a Denver youth minister's mind to the spiritual emptiness in Denver's donut.

[38 : 47] Denver had an inner city, hip, cool, inner city, and then there were the wealthy suburbs around Denver.

But in that area, between those, there was a local church, God led Mark Halleck to Calvary Church in Englewood, Colorado.

The church was nearly 60 years old at that time, and it was on life support. There were only 30 members who were attending on a regular basis most weekends.

And when Halleck became Calvary's pastor, he and the remaining members made a priority of three commitments.

Commitment number one was that they would love their neighbors authentically.
Commitment number two was that they would share the gospel each and every week.

[39 : 48] Commitment number three, they would preach through the Bible verse by verse. Halleck focused on mentoring men. He was mentoring them in how to be the spiritual leaders within the church.

He was mentoring them in how to be the spiritual leaders in their family. At that time, they had a traditional structure and they had a pastor and deacons and he began pouring his life into them.

He said, in many of our churches, we're great at getting men involved when it comes to fixing broken pipes or mowing the lawn. But he says, I'm talking about spiritual leadership, leadership in the home.

And so he began mentoring these men. He says, eventually the church transitioned from a pastor and deacons to instituting elders.

And the elders focused on using their pastoral gifts to attend to the church's spiritual needs and leading the church.

[41 : 05] The deacons used their gifts of serving to meet the growing congregation's physical needs. Today, and I looked at their website this week, they currently have eight elders, they have 21 deacons, and they have a number of deacons in training, and they have a number of elders in training as well.

Now the church became multi-generational, which Catherine and I was talking about that this week. It's important for a church to be multi-generational. Do you realize that?

If a church is full of us old folks, it's going to die with us. If a church is full of young people who don't have a whole lot of life experience, they will miss out on a lot of wisdom that comes with age.

And so, we can work together. You know, you younger folks, you have energy. You know, God knew what He was doing when He gave kids to young families.

Grandparents, we can spoil them and send them home. So, you have the energy. And I trust we have the wisdom. And so, we can work together.

[42 : 20] So, they were a multi-generational church. And Halleck was looking for ways to connect the older generation to the younger generation so they could hear one or another story.

So, Halleck said, the most significant chapter in Calvary's history came during a retreat early during his ministry became evident that there were two streams within the congregation that were developing.

The older 30 people who were there when He came was, as He put it, Calvary 1.0. And He says, the second stream was the 30 people who had joined the church after He became the pastor.

He referred to them as Calvary 2.0. He says, although that Calvary 1.0 was excited about all that God was doing within their midst, He said, they were still a bit unsure about the many changes in the church that had taken place since the church had grown throughout the years.

Calvary 2.0 shared the excitement, but they were eager to reach more people, and they wanted to move forward. He said, on the first night of the retreat, He put them all in a circle, and He spoke first to Calvary 1.0.

[43 : 41] He said, I want you to share the history of Calvary. He said, I want you to share your stories. And He said that first night of the retreat, He said, as Calvary 1.0 began sharing their history, many of them were in the church for 50 years, they said there were tears.

not only from Calvary 1.0, but Calvary 2.0. And as they shared their story, they began to share their history, and the excitement that used to be there when the church first began.

The next morning, He asked Calvary 2.0 to share their stories, and their vision for the future. Time after time, long-time members heard the younger, newer members talk about how much they appreciated all that Calvary 1.0 had done in their past, and had brought them to this point.

But now they wanted to invest their lives in the community, and they couldn't wait to see all that God had in store for them, and what God would do through their church in the years to come.

And as the two groups shared, Halleck says the Holy Spirit brought a unity and a shared vision.

[45 : 13] That afternoon, he said the two groups came together and became Calvary 3.0. Six years into the revitalization efforts at Calvary Church, the 30 regulars from Calvary 1.0 have turned into 700 regular attenders in Calvary 3.0.

Two groups of people. There came a shared vision and a shared excitement and said we can work together. Six years later, they went from 60 to 700 because of their unity and because a potential problem was solved when they came together and formed a brand new vision for what God could do through them.

we will not let setbacks set us back. Let's say that together. We will not let setbacks set us back.

Let's rely on the Holy Spirit to give us a solution. And I have said this before, but I'll say it again. if you ever see a situation, bring it to someone's attention that can do something about it.

Bring it to someone that can say, okay, it's changed right now. Or, let's put our heads together and let's see how we can solve this. Because there's never a reason for us to grow bitter.

[47 : 04] there is never a reason for us to grow disillusioned with the church. There is never a reason for us to drop out because of a problem that didn't get fixed.

And if it doesn't get fixed, then we pray about it and we come back and say, you know what, I don't think this is working. And we'll put our heads together again and say, let's see if this is going to help.

Let's see if that is going to help. Because there's no such thing as failure. We just figure out more ways that don't work until we find the way that does work.

So let's rely on the Holy Spirit to give us a solution, become unified in the mission, and move forward. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. Father, I thank you that you have called us to be a body.

And as a matter of fact, when our Lord Jesus Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed for our unity. His desire was the body of Christ would be unified together.

[48 : 16] So I pray, Heavenly Father, that we would not allow any setbacks to set us back, but that we would seek the solution from your Holy Spirit that we may be able to be reunified and that we may reclaim our effectiveness and move forward.

I thank you, Heavenly Father, for each one here today. I thank you, Heavenly Father, for your word, where you showed how the early church dealt with a potentially divisive problem, and it was taken care of effectively, and a unified church will be a growing church.

We thank you for what you will do in our midst as we continue to look to you. We pray this in Jesus' name.