Acts Lesson 23 Handout

Acts 6
1 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.

2 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.
Don't be distracted.

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU LISTEN TO.

THEY  We

As a Jesus follower – we all have a part.

The message of Jesus got out because of the WE not the THEY.
How many of you know should be’s will kill you? Have you ever had somebody fired up about an issue? They are passionate about it, and they think you should be equally passionate. You should be involved. I get that all the time.

You should be more interested in the Middle East, or you should be more involved in politics, or you should care more about abortion, or you should care more about the poor. You should care more about...you just fill in the blank. You should be...because somebody is fired up about it, and that’s good. We need to be fired up, but we need to understand the Holy Spirit gives us passions and you need to find people who have the same passions. Don’t put your shoulds on somebody else. I won’t should on you. You don’t should on me.

So the apostles stood up and said

"No, no. Time out. That’s not who God created us to be. It’s a good thing we all don’t do the same thing. That’s not the way to fix it."

They released the church to solve the problem.
3 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.

4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
5 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.

6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 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.

Now, I’m convinced that if you were to go to just about any church growth seminar you would NEVER (never, ever, ever, ever) hear that a great way for a church to experience dynamic growth would be for them to take care of widows and orphans and the needy.

It wouldn’t be a “cutting edge” kind of teaching. And I would be willing to bet that you’d never hear this proposed. And yet that’s precisely what we just read here in Acts 6. When they met the needs of the Widows... the disciples multiplied greatly!

Now, what you’ll often hear from MANY church growth experts is that a church needs to know who they’re going after. A successful church (we’re told) needs to have a TARGET AUDIENCE.

A church needs to decide who they’re going to target so that they can focus all their advertising and all their methods and all their activities on that target group. Are they going after Millennial, or young Families, or upwardly mobile business folks?
Once they know WHO to target, they know how to market themselves for that specific group.

Jesus said: “... the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:10

And again: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32

“come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.”

Psalm 68:5 “(God is the) Father of the fatherless and protector of widows...”

In Isaiah 1:17 “learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”

James 1:27 “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

The Romans feared death. The Romans viewed mercy and pity as things to be scoffed at and ridiculed.
Christians didn’t fear death.

Christians knew mercy was what Jesus had called them to do.

The early Church GREW the way Jesus wanted it to grow because they had the same priorities as Jesus.

Some of you need to get off the merry go round and enjoy the season God has you in - GUILT FREE.
8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.