

# Acts #6: Unity & Coordination of the Body

by Stephen Kaung

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and coordination within the body of Christ, especially in addressing cultural differences and challenges.*

**Duration:** 56:32

**Scripture:** Acts 6:1

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Spiritual Gifts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of each member of the church using their gifts and talents to serve God. He references Ephesians chapter 4 and Acts chapter 6 to illustrate the concept of coordinated and diverse service within the body of Christ. The speaker highlights the danger of certain individuals monopolizing the ministry and encourages the church to embrace the different cultural, social, and educational backgrounds of its members. He emphasizes that through the unity and cooperation of diverse members, the church can experience growth and love.

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## Transcript

4th, 1972, in Richland, VA, ministry is being given through Brother Stephen Kahn. Our Father, we do thank Thee, that we belong to the family of God. Not because we are worthy, but because Thou hast called us by Thy grace.

Our Father, we do desire that as Thy children in Thy family, we may know how to behave, that Thou mayest get all the glory and the honor. O Lord, our one desire is to glorify Thee. So we just commit ourselves to Thee for tonight, trusting Thy Holy Spirit to breathe upon Thy Word and make it living and operative in each of our lives.

We want Thee to do the work. We want Thee to bring us to a place that will please Thee, that will glorify Thee. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen. Will you please turn to the Bible. But in those days, the disciples multiplying in number, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were overlooked in the daily ministration.

And the twelve, having called a multitude of the disciples to them, said, It is not right that we, leaving the Word of God, should serve tables. Look out, therefore, brethren, from among yourselves seven men, well

reported of, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we will establish over this business. But we will give ourselves up to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, apostolate of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles. And having prayed, they lay their hands on them.

And the Word of God increased. And the number of the disciples in Jerusalem was very greatly multiplied. And a great crowd of the priests obeyed the faith.

This morning we mentioned how in the early church they met a problem. It was the problem of a man and his wife trying to lie to the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit was so real in the church that immediately the discipline of the Lord came upon them.

Now this incident was like a fly in an ointment. But before it can spoil the ointment, it was taken away. So it wasn't very serious.

It was a personal problem. It didn't affect the whole church. And it was solved right away because the Holy Spirit was there in the church.

But tonight you'll find in chapter 6, the church, the early church, had a real problem. This was the first real problem of the church. In chapter 5 it was a problem of a couple.

More personal in nature. But here you'll find it was a real problem. The first problem the church ever faced corporately.

I wonder if you can find on earth a church that does not have any problems. On the one hand we should never be satisfied with what we see. We should always strive for that which will answer to God's heart.

I do not believe that God wants us to just sit back and say, well, are we human? There will be problems. So what? We close our eyes, we sit back and try to be contented and satisfied. God wants us to strive for that which will satisfy his heart.

If his heart is not satisfied, let us not be satisfied. That's very true. But on the other hand there will always be problems.

If you want to look for a perfect church on earth, you can visit the whole world and you will not find it. You know, I know some people who are perfectionists and they are trying to look for a perfect church. They go to one place for a little while and then discover some spots and they move to the next place.

And at first they think that, well, the next place is better, but within a few months they discover something more and they have to move on. In other words, there is no perfect church on earth. There will be problems.

But in the early church, the early church flies on problems. Whenever you find they have a problem, the church seems to grow because of the problem. Instead of being defeated, instead of going under, you find problems serve as opportunities for the Lord to bring them to a higher level.

Brothers and sisters, this happened to the early church. And today, do not think that you can find a perfect church. No problem whatsoever.

If the Lord has really brought you together, the closer you are, the more you are living as members of one body, the more problems you will find. If you just visit once a week for an hour or two, just listening to a sermon, shake some hands and go home, no problem, no problem. But you don't call that church life.

If the Lord really put you together as members of one body, you see one another often, you try to worship God together, you try to serve God together, you try to minister one to another, you'll find plenty of problems. But the thing is, the church, according to God, thrives on problems. If there is no problem, there will be no growth.

If there is no problem, there will be no opportunity for the Lord to bring His people to a higher realm, to bring in His forethought. So dear brothers and sisters, do not look for a perfect church without problems. But thank God, when there are problems, there are opportunities for God.

And you'll find with the early church, this was the case. The first real problem that came to the church was a problem created by the Hellenists and the Hebrews. In other words, in the early church in Jerusalem, it was composed mainly of Jews.

There was no Gentile. All Jews. Some proselytes, yes.

But we may say the church in Jerusalem was composed of people whose background were all Jewish. So they had no racial problem, but they had cultural problems. Why? Because these Jews were of two kinds.

Some Jews were born and reared in the land of Judea. They were Hebrew Jews. They were exposed to the strict teaching and practice of Judaism.

But there were other Jews who were born and reared in Gentile cities, dispersed throughout the world at that time. So they were exposed to Greek culture. They were Jews, but they received Greek culture.

Their outlook, their views, somehow were affected by Greek civilization. They were not so strict in keeping the law as the Hebrew Jews. They were more liberal because they had more contact with the world.

More intellectual, probably. So these were Hellenist Jews or Greek Jews. In the early church in Jerusalem, they were all Jews, but some were Greek Jews, some were Hebrew Jews.

And God put them together, formed one body. Naturally, the twelve apostles being Hebrew Jews. Naturally, they knew more of the conditions among the believers with Hebrew-Jewish backgrounds.

So in the matter of the taking care of the widows among them, it seemed as if the widows of the Hebrew Jews, the Christians, with Hebrew-Jewish backgrounds, they were well taken care of. But the widows that belonged to those believers with Hellenistic backgrounds, they were overlooked. Not intentionally.

Certainly the apostles were not intentionally, you know, overlooked the willingness and took care of the Hebrews. Certainly they wouldn't do that. It wasn't a matter of intention.

It was just a matter of circumstance. It's a circumstantial thing. I do not know why there were so many widows in the early days.

It seemed as if in the church in Jerusalem there were lots of widows. Probably life was very hard in those days. The church took care of the widows.

Not only in the Old Testament. God commanded his people not to neglect the widows. You know, even when a man was reaping, harvesting, and if anything was left behind, he shouldn't go back and try to pick up these seeds.

He should just leave them behind for widows, for orphans, for strangers. God took care of these widows. He was the father of the fatherless and the judge of the widows.

So you'll find in the early church they always took care of the widows. And even in 1 Timothy you'll find a widow that was over 70 years old was in the list of the church. That is, the church took care of these widows.

Thank God for that. They are really one big family. But somehow, due to human limitations, not intentional, but circumstantial, the widows of the Greek Jews were neglected.

And because of that there was brothers and sisters, it was the first real problem to the church. It was a problem of cultural difference. You know, there are many natural distinctions in our lives, such as racial distinction, Greek and Jews.

Such as cultural differences. Those who receive Greek culture and those who receive Hebrew culture. Such as social differences.

Some are masters, freemen. Some are government servants. Educational differences.

Some were barbarians. Some were Scythians. Naturally speaking, you'll find on this earth there are many, many distinctions.

These are natural lines of demarcation. It is natural for the world to be divided through these lines because these are natural lines. It's very easy to be divided.

Very easy. But in the redemption of Christ, in the work of God, He does something tremendous. He brings in some from the Jews, some from the Gentiles, and makes them one.

He brings in some freemen and some government and makes them one. He brings in the Scythians and the barbarians and makes them one. In Christ, all these natural distinctions are eliminated.

All gone. Therefore the Bible says, there is neither Jews nor Gentiles. Before you come into the church, you are a Jew.

But something happens when you come into the church. You are no longer a Jew. There is no Jew in the church.

Before you come to the church, you are a Gentile. But when you enter into the church, something happens. Your Gentile is left outside.

You become something else. There is no Gentile in the church. Before you come to the church, you may be a freeman.

You may have a high social position. But when you come into the church, you are no longer a freeman. There is no freeman.

We are slaves to Christ. Or you may be a slave. Very low social status.

But when you come into the church, you are no longer a slave. You are free in Christ. Brothers and sisters, when we come into Christ, when we come into the church, God has done something in us.

All these natural distinctions are eliminated. The old creation is finished. It's left out.

We are now a new man. A new creation. The body of Christ.

It is Christ. I always remember that incident. Our dear brother, Watchman Lee, you know, he has a servant.

I know that servant. A dear brother in the Lord. Oh, he just loved Brother Lee.

And he cooked for Brother Lee, you know. And he loved Brother Lee to such an extent, he used his own salary to buy food for Brother Lee. And Brother Lee could not at any time say, well, I like this dish.

If he say that, he will have that every day. That brother just loved Brother Lee, you know, and served him so faithfully. But, when they came to the church, that is, when they come together, because they are both brothers, they came to the Lord to remember the Lord and his people.

This brother always looked where Brother Lee sat. He dare not sit near him. He always tried to sit somewhere else behind.

So one day, Brother Lee just got hold of him and get him to sit by him. Why? In the church, there is no freeman nor barman. We are brothers.

And you know, in the early church, this especially, like in the church in Rome, most of them were slaves. But some were freemen. But when they came together, there wasn't any sin of freemen.

Brothers and sisters, in Christ, in the church, all that is natural is left out. We are now in Christ and Christ is in us. That make us one body, one church.

But, how subtle is our flesh. How subtle is the enemy trying to bring in the old creation. And once you allow that which belongs to the old creation to get into the church, it will split up the church if it is not dealt with.

So the first problem to the church here is if this thing should continue, the whole church in Jerusalem will be split along the cultural line. The Hebrew Jews, they will meet as one circle. And the Hellenist Jews will meet as another circle.

The church will be broken, divided along the line of culture. It was a great temptation. A great temptation.

It's very easy, you know. It's very easy to find yourself close to people who have the same background. The same cultural background.

The same social position. It's very easy. One day a brother, he was a high official in the Chinese government.

I know him very well. And he talked to brother Nick. He said, I'm thinking of organizing a church where all these high officials can come and worship God.

You know, these high officials, they will not come to any church. You have to organize a church for them. So our brother said, all right, if you want to organize a church for high officials, then I think the the rickshaw

drivers, you know, those rickshaw pulleys that pull the rickshaws, they should have a rickshaw church.

Then they will feel very happy because they are all rickshaw drivers. The church is above all these natural distinctions which belong to the old creation. We are one.

But how subtle was the enemy? You find here the enemy used that natural distinction, cultural differences and tried to put a wedge into the life of the church. Again I say, so far as the apostles were concerned, it was not intentional. It couldn't be.

It's just circumstantial. And a murmuring began to rise. You know, God does not like murmurs.

If you read the Bible from the Old Testament down to the New Testament, you'll find God never likes murmuring. And sometimes when people began to murmur, God dealt with them very strongly. Why? Murmur is the beginning of strife and division.

If a murmur is not stopped, it will soon develop into something very serious. Being brothers and sisters, why can they not just talk openly? The Bible says, speak the truth in love. If the widows of the Hellenists were neglected, why not these Hellenists who knew the situation? Why did they not come to the apostles and told the apostles? I believe the apostles were appreciated very much.

They were human. They were limited. They didn't see it.

Even though they were very spiritual, yes, the apostles were highly spiritual, but they were not perfect. But instead of coming to the apostles and present the problem to them, they murmured behind their backs. And the murmurs began to spread.

You know. And if this did not come to the ear of the apostles, one day suddenly the break. It was dangerous.

But fortunately, the murmurs began to be heard by the apostles. And when the apostles heard that, what did they do? Brothers and sisters, here you find a problem. A problem.

A problem is not a problem in itself. It depends on the way how you handle it. If you handle it right, it is not a problem.

It is an opportunity. If you handle it wrongly, then it becomes a real problem. So when the murmuring came to the ear of the apostles, look what the apostles did.

Instead of getting hurt, they brought it up openly to the whole. It's much better if it is something that concerns the whole church to be brought to the whole body for fellowship. Than trying to hide something and murmur at the back.

Everything was brought to the open. Brought to the open. The apostles were humble enough.

They were not so proud as to think there was no problem. They were willing to lay everything before the brothers and sisters. And they said, it is not good for us to serve the table.

You know, actually this problem gave the apostles opportunity to reconsider their service to the Lord. Probably they were wondering during those days, why is it that we were so busy? We were so busy serving the table we didn't even have time to pray. We didn't even have time to minister the word of God.

Probably the apostles were at were perplexing, you know. On the one hand, the table had to be served. These things had to be done.

The widows had to be taken care of. You cannot just say, well, we won't do anything. No, you have to do it.

And yet, probably the apostles were wondering, now why is it that it evilly affected our ministry of the word, our prayer life? Probably the apostles were wondering about that, but they didn't know, you know. But this problem brought to their attention and they began to see. What did they see? They see one thing.

We cannot monopolize all the service of the church. The church being the body of Christ, there is a place for each member. There are diversities of ministry.

The apostles are not to monopolize all the spiritual service of the church. And that's what they did in the beginning. You know, they didn't know anything better.

They thought that being called by God to be apostles, being leaders, certainly they should take care of everything. Not because they were ambitious, but because they all were conscientious. You know, they were innocent.

So they tried to do everything for the church. Oh, they not only prayed and not only ministered the word, but they also filled the table. You see, they tried to do everything.

Very humble. They were doing their best. You cannot blame them.

But they found it didn't work. Even though they did their best, they found there was that problem there. They overlooked someone.

It was bad. It was really bad. They began to see that there are diverse services, ministries in the church.

The apostles are not to monopolize all the spiritual services of the church. The apostles are not to be responsible for everything. Every member of the body has its special service of ministry.

God calls apostles to pray and to preach and to minister the word. God has not called them to serve Satan. So when they served tables, they didn't serve very, very well.

We may think that if the apostles are serving tables, certainly that's the best service. No. No.

When they minister the word, yes. But when they try to serve the table, they find that it's very, very bad because they serve one and miss out. They began to discover their limitations.

They began to discover that it takes other members of the body to complete. Brothers and sisters, you know, that problem is opportunity. If there was no such problem in the early church, the apostles would be continuing serving tables, you know.

And the result was they would be so involved in social work. They had no work for preaching and for praying. So thank God for their problem.

It awakened them. It woke them up. They began to see it is not good.

It is not good. This is not God's way. God's way with His church is different members have different ministries.

Thus coordinating one with another. So they suggested let several men be chosen. Men with good reports.

Full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. And let them serve. And when the church heard about it, they were pleased with it.

They responded. You know, that's the way to do things. Anything that affects the whole body is not decided by a few.

By a few leaders. They should try to see the feeling of the body. You know.

They should put it to the body and see how the body responds to it. Because it affects the whole church. Brothers and sisters, is serving the table a lower ministry than serving the Word? In our human understanding we may think that certainly giving ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, that's spiritual service.

Serving the table. That's manual work. That's secular work.

It has nothing to do with spiritual work. But dear brothers and sisters, the Word of God does not say so. It is not a matter of whether you are ministering the Word or whether you are serving the table.

It is a matter of what are you called to do. If you are called to minister the Word, then as you minister the Word, you serve the Lord. It is spiritual.

But if you are called to serve the table and you serve as you are called, you are serving God. It is spiritual. There is no difference in the eyes of God.

Not because you are to serve with the Word of God. You have to be full of the Holy Spirit. But when you are serving the table, well, you don't need to be full of the Holy Spirit.

What's the use of being filled with the Holy Spirit to serve the table? Anybody can do that. No. No.

In a restaurant, yes. You can serve the table without being filled with the Holy Spirit. But in the church, when you are serving the table, you have to be full of the Holy Spirit.

Why? Because in the church serving the table is a holy work. Serving God. Serving.

You need to be full of the Holy Spirit. In order to do it spiritually. In the church, so far as our service and ministry is concerned, it is not more than a matter of to have it done.

You know? Usually we say, well, we can do it. That's all it matters. You know? In the church, it is more than a matter of having a thing done.

It is a matter of how you do it. How you do it. Do you do it with the Spirit of Christ in you? Or do you do it because it is something to be done? If you preach because it is something to be done.

It is worse than serving the table with the Spirit of Christ. So here you'll find there is no sense of inferior or superior services. No, it is the same.

Serving the Lord. Some are called to serve in one way. Some are called to serve in another way.

All are spiritual if they are done with the right way. And you know what happens? After the apostles acknowledge their limitation and were willing to open up the services of the church to the other members of the body, the result was those seven men that were chosen, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, they served the table so well there was no more murmuring. They did better than the apostles.

And because they did so well, the apostles were free to preach the gospel so you'll find the Word of God multiplied. Through the cooperation and the coordination of the different members of the body, each fulfilling its ministry. The result was the body grows in love.

Brothers and sisters, you know, that problem becomes a blessing because it is handled in the right way. In the right spirit. What is the church? What is the body? You read the New Testament and you'll find the teaching in the epistles.

Here you'll find a demonstration. There wasn't any teaching yet. It was just a demonstration.

And later on in epistles you'll find the teaching. And the teaching is in the body there are many and each member has the Holy Spirit that will give gifts according to the purpose that each one is called to minister. It is not a few big members monopolize everything and do everything for the church.

If they do that the church will not grow. And they will not be able to do things well. They try to do too many things and nothing is done right.

Whereas according to the word of God you'll find that God in his wisdom has put everyone in the body. We are all priests. There is a place, a service, a ministry for each one of us in the body.

And it is God's will that all these members should learn to function according to the grace, to the gift that God has given to each. Not only to function but to function coordinately. Not doing the same thing.

Everyone does something and yet together as members of one body. And this is Ephesians chapter 4. You'll find Ephesians chapter 4 practice in Acts chapter 6 before the teaching comes. Those who are gifted more have the temptation of monopolizing everything in the church.

Those who are little gifted, less gifted tend to bury their talents in the earth. But according to the wisdom of God, you'll find that everyone has a place. And we need to be living, functioning members.

Functioning together, coordinately, directed by the head, the Holy Spirit. And the result was the word of God increased greatly. Many came to the Lord during the Holy Day.

Notice. When the apostles brought this matter to the whole church and suggested that several men be chosen in serving the Lord in whatever capacity it may be. Even serving the table.

You need to be full of the Holy Spirit. Because you are not doing it according to your thoughts by your own strength. Depending on your past experience.

If you are a waiter or waitress in the restaurant then you think you can serve the table in the church. Not at all. If you are an executive in a big company then you think you can be an elder in the church.

Not at all. Not at all. You have to be full of the Holy Spirit.

Under the control of the Holy Spirit. Anything in the church has to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Served by men and women under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Then you find everything is coordinated. So this matter was brought to the whole church at that time. So they chose seven men.

And do you know these seven men as you read the names? All of them were Hellenist Jews. None of them was the Hebrew Jews were in majority. The Hellenist Jews were in minority.

But here you'll find when they chose the seven men, all of them were Hellenist Jews. Isn't that something? If the whole creation was in control, certainly these Hebrew Jews would say, Oh, I must choose seven men. We are the majority.

We will choose Hebrew Jews. So our widows will still be taken care of. But no.

These brothers with Hebrew background, they saw the problem. They loved their brethren so much. In order to conquer them they choose everyone from the opposite camp if we may use that word.

They are not the opposite camp. From the Hellenist Jews. Their widows were neglected.

So let's choose their men. They will know their situation better. So their widows will be taken care of.

They never thought of that. They were never afraid that now the table will be turned and their widows will be neglected. No.

They were not thinking of that. Brothers and sisters, you'll find how love overcame all the natural fear within them. They choose every one of them.

Hellenist Jews. And by doing that they keep the unity. Brothers and sisters, the church at that time was faced with a real serious problem.

If that problem was handled wrongly, it would split the church right down the line. It was serious. To keep the unity, the oneness of the body, these brothers, brethren, they have such love.

They forgot themselves. They thought of what will happen to those who had already been offended. They went the second mile.

And because they did that, the unity of the church was superior. That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

So, brothers and sisters, do not be afraid of problems. When problem arises, this is the time that we shall go to the Lord and speak. Probably the Lord has something to teach us.

Probably, out of the problem, we may be raised to a higher level. Probably, out of the problem, we will be nearer to the original purpose of God concerning the church. Now, if we have that kind of spirit within us, and if we are really open to one another, if we really love one another, if we really strive to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, if we are really willing to forget ourselves and to think of our brothers and sisters, you will find, by the grace of God, the church will be lifted to a higher level.

And that's what happened in the early church. So, dear brothers and sisters, tonight, this is my burden. As the Lord brings His people together, be prepared to have problems.

We are still human. We are limited. But our limitation is God's opportunity.

That we may learn how we need one another. Otherwise, we may think, well, we can do it. Then we learn to need one another.

And really learn to work together with humility, with meekness, with forbearance, with love. And if you do that, you will find the body of the church grows, is built up with love. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank Thee.

Because Thou art working towards the completion of Thy body. We do praise and thank Thee that Thou dost allow sometimes problems to come among Thy people. That we may be given the opportunity to learn something more of Thee.

O Lord, we do ask Thee that Thou will lead us on. Thou will open our eyes that we may see how we need to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. How we need to bear and forbear one another.

How we need our brother and our sister. We cannot do everything ourselves. But Lord, teach us how to be functioning members of the body.

According to that which we each are called, we may serve Thee with humility, with faithfulness. O Lord, we do pray that the body may be built up in love. We do pray that it may soon be matured to that fullness of the stature of Christ.

That He may come back to claim His body as His bride. So we pray that these lessons may be deeply impressed upon us. And we pray that they will be worked in and worked out among us.

We do worship Thee together. In the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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