

Acts 6: 1-7 as a Model for Addressing Tribalism and Alienation-Induced Ecclesiastical Crises in Nigeria

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Abstract

Tribalism, marginalisation, and favouritism are evident in Nigerian churches today, and this has caused intra-denominational crises that sometimes lead to division, due to the failure of the church leadership to address such situations effectively. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to explore and apply Acts 6: 1-7 as a model for addressing such problems in the church, particularly in Nigeria. The study is basically qualitative in approach, and it made use of the phenomenological, hermeneutical, and text analysis methods. While the phenomenological method was deployed to gather information randomly from members of various Christian denominations through personal communications, the hermeneutical method was used to interpret the text. The findings of the study show that many congregants are dissatisfied with the tribalism and oppression in some of the churches. While some of them bottle up their dissatisfaction, some express their displeasure; moreover, some situations have degenerated into intra-denominational crises and breakups in some instances. The position of this paper is that Acts 6: 1-7 is significant for the church to ensure equity, fairness, justice, and inclusiveness in ecclesiastical administration and management. It therefore recommends the text as a model to address the issue of tribalism, discrimination, and marginalisation in the church.

Key words: Acts 6: 1-7, the church, tribalism, marginalisation, and ecclesiastical crisis.

Introduction

This study arises from deeply personal observations and experiences regarding the leadership dynamics and administration of various churches in Nigeria. It is strikingly apparent that an unwritten tradition of ethnic bias significantly influences administrative decisions and management practices within different church denominations across the country. Notably, within Pentecostal churches, we witness oppressive tendencies, issues of loyalty and disloyalty, politicization in decision-making, and fierce struggles for leadership roles. These challenges are not just minor inconveniences; they are critical factors that contribute to deep-seated divisions within Nigerian churches. This paper aims to shed light on the urgent need to address these intra-denominational conflicts, which stem from ethnocentric attitudes and nepotism. These issues lead to the unjust treatment of specific groups within the faith community, hindering unity and progress. We must confront these challenges head-on to foster a more inclusive and harmonious church environment.

Looking closely at the configuration of the leadership structure of some Christian denominations (particularly the mainline Pentecostal Churches) in Nigeria, one would observe that even though no church exclusively represents a specific tribe, particular tribes are dominant in most of the churches especially at the top management levels, and this often reflects the background of the founders and/or General Overseers. For example, the Assemblies of God, Roman Catholic Church, The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministry among others are more Igbo than else; The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith Church (aka Winners Chapel), Christ Apostolic Church, Nigerian Baptist Convention etc. are predominantly Yoruba leadership; leaders of Edo State origin dominate the Christ Chosen Church of

God;; Hausa and allied language groups dominate ECWA. A church that is made up of a balance of population from two, three, or more different tribes might reduce tribal and cultural sentiments (Adeyanju and Bello, 2019). But this is hardly realistic; hence, in most cases, a particular tribe or ethnic group dominates some denominations, and the tendency has often been to overshadow the impact of others.

Not only could the dominance of a particular tribe in a Christian denomination cause the undermining of the contributions of the minority members, but it could also breed internal strife, division, leadership conflict, and factionalism within the church, which could deeply undermine its unity, stifle spiritual growth, and threaten its stability. As noted by Anyanwu (2022), ecclesiastical division fosters a climate of suspicion, leading members to view one another not as co-labourers in faith but as adversaries. This erosion of trust undermines the essence of Christian fellowship (*koinonia*), which is built on love, mutual respect, and a shared purpose. There is need for clerics to promote good governance by entrenching the principles of fairness and transparency in church administration (Omosor, 2019). Against this backdrop, the need to pay attention to the issue of ethnicity, nepotism, and marginalisation within the church denominations in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised.

A close reading of Acts 6: 1-7 would reveal that the text holds so much significance for the church today, as it does not only hint at the inevitable presence of different ethnic groups in the church as it grows and spreads as well as the possibility of disaffection and crises resulting from various forms of alienation and marginalisation, but also embeds a significant model for the management of possible crises and division that are consequent upon the marginalisation of the minority or less privileged in the church. Therefore, this study generally discusses the issue of ethnicity and alienation within church denominations and applies Acts 6: 1-7 as a model for administering a Christian denomination with diverse ethnic, social, and economic classifications.

Methodology

The study is basically qualitative, and the methods used include sociological analysis and phenomenological methods. The text is explained and analysed to show how a proactive response to the demands or complaints of the minority, disadvantaged, or oppressed groups can nip disaffection and acrimony in the bud and forestall crises that could bring about schism or secession. On the other hand, random sampling was employed as a means of surveying the opinions of different persons (Christians) in various Christian denominations on the issue of ethnicity or tribalism in church administration and the effects or implications. Since it is practically impossible to cover the whole of Nigeria, the study was limited to Delta State. More so, the persons interviewed were randomly selected, and since the issue of ethnicity is more pronounced in Pentecostal and indigenous churches, the interviewees were randomly selected from some of those churches such as Assemblies of God, Church of God Mission, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Apostolic Church, Living Faith Church (Winner Chapel), Cherubim and Seraphim, Christ's Chosen Church of God, and the Baptist Church among others. Personal observation method was also employed to provide the researchers perspective on the subject.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual foundation of this study is the phenomenon of ecclesiastical crisis, which refers to significant and urgent challenges encountered within religious organizations, particularly within the Christian church. The effects of such crises manifest in various forms, including internal discord, declining membership, ethical failures among leaders, doctrinal controversies, and threats to the church's authority and societal relevance. These multifaceted crises may either originate within the church or emerge in reaction to external sociocultural dynamics.

Key examples of ecclesiastical crises are as follows: 1. Declining Membership and Relevance: A growing number of congregations are contending with a marked decrease in membership and a significant erosion of their cultural influence. 2. Moral Failures of Leaders: Scandals involving sexual misconduct, financial irregularities, and other significant ethical breaches among church leadership severely undermine the institution's credibility, precipitating a substantial crisis. 3. Doctrinal Disputes and Schisms: Profound disagreements regarding theological interpretations and practices can catalyse divisions within the church, frequently resulting in the emergence of new denominations. 4. External Challenges: Factors

such as secularization, rapid societal transformation, and the proliferation of alternative belief systems present formidable obstacles to the church's authority and relevance. 5. Conflict and Division: Internal strife, disagreements, and power struggles can instigate crises within the church, fostering disunity and potentially leading to the closure of congregations.

Importantly, an ecclesiastical crisis transcends mere challenge; it embodies a crucial opportunity for the church to engage in self-examination, growth, and a restoration of its fundamental mission. As outlined in biblical literature, a crisis serves as a powerful catalyst for positive transformation and renewal. Embracing this potential can yield profound outcomes for the church. In this context, the study focuses on the ecclesiological interpretation of Acts 6:1–7, which provides a biblical framework for addressing internal crises in the church. This passage highlights a pivotal moment in the early Christian community, where complaints arose regarding the equitable distribution of food between Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews. Recognizing the risks posed to community unity, the apostles responded by appointing seven individuals of exemplary character, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to oversee these distribution challenges. This delegation allowed the apostles to concentrate on prayer and ministry, ultimately facilitating conflict resolution and promoting church growth and influence (Okeke, 2021).

This framework posits that when scriptural models are accurately interpreted and contextually applied, they provide viable solutions to ecclesiastical crises. In this relational model, the theological application of Acts 6:1–7 functions as the independent variable, while ecclesiastical leadership structures, conflict resolution mechanisms, and Spirit-guided governance act as mediating factors. The outcomes sought – namely, conflict resolution, restoration of unity, and church growth – are the dependent variables.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in John Dewey's collective decision-making paradigm, a theory articulated by the esteemed American philosopher and educator. This framework underscores the vital importance of shared responsibility and collaborative decision-making within a community. Decisions should be made through inclusive processes that engage all community members, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed. The application of this theory to Acts 6:1-7 provides a compelling model for effective communal decision-making. When the early church encountered a significant challenge – the equitable distribution of resources – the apostles understood the necessity of involving the community. Rather than imposing a unilateral solution, they actively engaged the entire community by selecting and appointing "seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). This approach highlights the urgent need to address the specific challenges facing the Diocese of Sapele, such as leadership disputes, doctrinal disagreements, and financial mismanagement. It is essential that all factions within the Diocese, including clergy, laity, and various groups, have a meaningful voice in the decision-making process. Additionally, it is crucial to select individuals who are respected, spiritually mature, and equipped with the wisdom and integrity needed to confront these challenges effectively.

Causes of Crises in the Church

Numerous factors drive dissatisfaction and unrest within many church communities, often culminating in severe crises and profound divisions among members. It is crucial to recognize the following critical issues that can incite such turmoil.

Politicisation of Church Management

Politics of self-interest bedevils the church today. Those at the helm of affairs are often afraid of appointing certain people to take charge of sensitive and critical aspects of the church, even if such persons are qualified to hold such positions. Thus, the church is politicized due to an underlying phobia on the part of those managing the church. As Ottuh and Omosor have pointed out (though concerning inter-religious relations), religious phobia often leads to the politicisation of religious conflicts. This implies that intra-denominational conflicts could be politicised to promote the interests of certain individuals; hence, justice, fairness, and equity could be compromised.

Leadership Disputes

One of the most pressing sources of conflict arises from misunderstandings about leadership styles and decision-making processes. In numerous churches, the authority to appoint or elect new leaders rests primarily with church authorities, frequently leaving the congregation sidelined. This exclusion undermines the collective voice of church members, who deserve the right to vote for the leaders they believe best align with their values and vision. When members feel disenfranchised, it can breed discontent, eroding trust and leading to a gradual breakdown of community cohesion.

Doctrinal Differences

Disparities in the understanding and interpretation of biblical texts can ignite serious discord within the church. Misinterpretations may give rise to heretical beliefs, sharply dividing members. Various theological perspectives, shaped by different seminary educations and liturgical traditions, can fracture the congregation's unity. A well-trained clergyman should embody a deep understanding of liturgy and Anglican doctrine, yet a lack of this expertise among some clergy can dangerously escalate tensions and conflict.

Financial Mismanagement

The effective stewardship of church resources is vital for maintaining trust and unity within the congregation. Financial mismanagement—whether through misappropriation or lack of transparency—can become a significant catalyst for unrest. Concerns regarding the integrity of financial reporting, particularly surrounding Diocesan obligations, can lead to feelings of distrust and resentment. This lack of accountability is more than just a financial issue; it's a betrayal of the community's faith that can fracture relationships and create an environment rife with suspicion.

Power Struggle

The quest for power within a church can sow seeds of discord and disillusionment. When factions within the congregation seek to challenge or displace an incumbent leader, it results in internal strife that detracts from the church's mission. This relentless pursuit of dominance not only breeds dissatisfaction but also disengagement from church activities. As power struggles escalate, the church risks descending into chaos, losing sight of its primary purpose of fostering community and spiritual growth.

Pride

The dangers of pride and self-centeredness within individuals can create deep fractures in church unity. When members focus solely on their interests, disregarding the contributions and experiences of others, they foster an atmosphere of isolation and division. Such self-absorption invariably leads to significant rifts in relationships within the community. As emphasized in the book of James, the roots of conflict often lie in unbridled desires and personal ambitions. Embracing humility and collective spirit is essential to safeguarding the church from discord.

Abuse of Power

The responsible use of power is fundamental to nurturing healthy relationships within the church. Power, when misused, can poison the well of community trust. Leaders must wield their influence ethically, understanding the broader implications of their actions. As conflict expert Harry Boer states, individuals can choose to use power positively or negatively. A commitment to transparency and integrity in leadership is vital to prevent crises from erupting within the church.

Tribalism, Favouritism, and Alienation

The insidious effects of tribalism and favouritism can deeply undermine church unity, particularly in contexts like Nigeria, where tribal identities often dominate the landscape. These sentiments foster prejudices that impair fairness and objectivity, making it nearly impossible to achieve justice within the congregation. When certain groups receive preferential treatment while others feel marginalized, it can sow the seeds of discontent that may fester and grow if left unaddressed. To build a truly vibrant and inclusive church community, equity and inclusivity must be prioritized, ensuring that every voice is heard

and treasured. In conclusion, addressing these issues head-on is not just advisable; it's essential for nurturing a united, thriving church community. By fostering an environment grounded in transparency, respect, and inclusivity, congregations can not only avert crises but also cultivate a spirit of harmony and shared purpose.

Effects of Ecclesiastical Crises

Crisis within a religious organization, particularly defined as a formal fragmentation or schism, often arises from entrenched conflicts that may be doctrinal, ethnic, related to leadership struggles, or driven by marginalization in church governance. The Anglican Diocese of Sapele has experienced significant repercussions from such crises, extending beyond mere ecclesiastical disunity to impact its mission fulfilment, credibility, and overall spiritual maturation.

One primary outcome of these crises is the deterioration of communal trust and ecclesial unity. As noted by Anyanwu (2022), the emergence of ecclesiastical divisions fosters an environment of suspicion, where congregants no longer regard each other as collaborative partners in faith but rather as adversaries. This erosion of trust is detrimental to the essence of Christian fellowship (*koinonia*), which relies on love, mutual respect, and a collective mission orientation (John 17:21). In the Sapele Diocese, ongoing internal disputes have led to weakened ecclesial structures and a pronounced loss of collective identity, resulting in parishes functioning more as independent entities than as integral components of a cohesive diocesan body.

Moreover, crises frequently catalyse leadership schisms and organizational dysfunction. The fragmentation activates varying factions, each vying for legitimacy in leadership, which can give rise to parallel authority systems that confound church members and impede the execution of diocesan initiatives (Ishola & Ugwu, 2022). The apostolic model illustrated in Acts 6:1–7 serves as an exemplar for resolving such conflicts, emphasizing the necessity of inclusive leadership and pastoral responses sensitive to the dynamics of conflict. The early church's proactive appointment of deacons illustrates a strategic effort to manage emerging tensions without compromising the gospel mission (Okeke, 2021).

Another critical consequence of the crisis is the resulting spiritual disorientation and doctrinal ambiguity among the laity. During periods of conflict, congregants often find themselves divided in allegiance, leading to uncertainty in spiritual guidance. As articulated by Ogedegbe (2022), schisms can distort spiritual authority, particularly when clergy within divergent groups present conflicting teachings or manipulate scripture to legitimize their respective positions. This fragmentation risks fostering heretical ideologies or syncretistic practices as adherents search for alternative spiritual expressions outside the Anglican tradition.

Additionally, crises jeopardize the church's public credibility and witness. The church is fundamentally called to illuminate societal darkness (Matthew 5:14-16), yet internal discord can severely undermine its moral authority in the wider community. For the Anglican Diocese of Sapele, unresolved conflicts have diminished its impact on social development, interdenominational dialogue, and evangelistic outreach. Communities may grow skeptical of a church espousing messages of love and reconciliation that fails to embody those principles internally (Eze & Agbo, 2023). On the economic front, crises can have deleterious effects on church resources. The duality of leadership often results in misallocation of funds, increased litigation expenses, and potential loss or division of church properties (Adetunji, 2020). Such material distractions further divert the church from its spiritual mission, reallocating energy toward legal disputes rather than evangelism and discipleship.

Furthermore, crises contribute to youth disengagement and generational drift. Younger members, often seeking spiritual authenticity and communal integrity, may become disillusioned amid persistent ecclesiastical turmoil. Research indicates that young adults are more likely to vacate congregations embroiled in internal politics or lacking transparent conflict resolution (Nwachukwu, 2021). This disconnection presents a significant threat to the church's viability and intergenerational continuity.

In conclusion, the ramifications of crises in religious organizations are multifaceted, encompassing spiritual, social, and economic dimensions. Left unchecked, crises can derail entire ecclesial structures and obstruct the fulfilment of Christ's mandate. The resolution model presented in Acts 6:1–7, where the apostles confronted emerging divisions through community empowerment and the appointment of trustworthy leaders for practical ministry, provides a timeless theological framework for conflict

resolution. Applying such scriptural insights within the context of the present-day church could mitigate the adverse effects of crises and foster restored unity within the Body of Christ. Thus, the deleterious effects of crisis on religious organizations can prominently manifest in several areas:

- i. Division and Fragmentation:** Crises can precipitate division and fragmentation within a religious body, leading to the formation of new factions or communities. Wherever there is injustice, conflicts, division, and separation are possible.
- ii. Loss of Membership:** Autocratic leadership structures contribute to the erosion of membership, with individuals often departing to affiliate with newly emerging groups or communities.
- iii. Damage to Reputation:** Crises can significantly tarnish the reputation of a religious organization, leading to a loss of public trust and engagement.

Analysis of Acts 6: 1- 7

The Text in English (Revised Standard Version)

¹Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵And what they said pleased the whole multitude, they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them. ⁷And the word of God increases; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The Socio-Cultural Context of the Text

Understanding the ethical implications within Acts 6:1-7 requires a deep grasp of the broader narrative context. The Acts of the Apostles (Acts) is not merely a sequel to the Gospel of Luke; it stands as a powerful testament of its own, with contemporary readers viewing it as a legitimate and parallel account of events that shaped their faith. Da Silva (2018) convincingly argues that Acts serves vital functions: it affirms the credibility of the Gospel, propels an apologetic agenda, situates the Christian movement within God's unfolding divine plan for His chosen people, and marks a pivotal transition from established authority figures in Judaism to a transformative new set of leaders and a vibrant community. This development underlines the place of Acts in understanding the early Church and its enduring impact today.

The text of Acts 6: 1 – 7 presents a narrative of the early church. It is important to note that Acts of the Apostles is an interface between the gospels and the epistles (Parsons, 2015). It provides detailed insight into how the church started and grew. At the beginning of the early church in Jerusalem, there were members of different backgrounds, namely, the Palestinian Jews and the Hellenistic Jews (Ngele & Peters, 2019). The former could be described as the native or home-grown Hebrews who spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, and the latter as diaspora Jews who probably had Greek citizenship and spoke the Greek language. Slick (2018) posits that Hellenistic Jews likely approached the Torah with less rigidity than their Hebraic counterparts. This difference in interpretation may have fostered a superiority complex among the Hebraic Jews, causing significant cultural divides.

Richardson (2021) draws attention to scholarly viewpoints suggesting that this episode reveals a deeper ideological rift between the two groups, underscoring the emergence of distinct factions vying for power and influence in the early community. Although the extent of the issue may be debated, its inclusion in the narrative underscores the existence of a serious controversy that is, in part, driven by profound cultural and gender disparities within the group. Citing the view of Anold, Ngele & Peters (2019) maintained that the treatment of Jews during Jesus' time—marked by cultural marginalization and harsh political repression, particularly from the Romans—unquestionably fostered a mindset of racial prejudice within certain Jewish communities. This mindset not only affected their interactions with each other but

also strained relationships with fellow Jews of Greek descent. Long before the Christian church emerged, entrenched conflicts arose between Palestinian and Hellenistic Jews, rooted in significant cultural differences that bred distrust and discord. When the gospel of Christ was introduced to both groups, many individuals responded positively and embraced salvation. Yet, it's crucial to recognize that this newfound faith did not erase the deep-seated cultural differences between them. The legacy of distrust and bickering lingered, reminding us that even in the pursuit of unity, the shadows of our past can influence our present relationships. Addressing these cultural dynamics is essential for fostering genuine community and understanding among diverse groups within the faith. This situation not only highlights the complexities of early Jewish society but also calls attention to the urgent need for equitable treatment and understanding among its members.

DeYoung et al. (2003) frontally addressed the pressing issue of inequality in the context of Jesus' time in Galilee. The society in the time of the early Church and Jesus was marked by significant divisions and hierarchies, leading to widespread discrimination that was deep-seated in ethnic and cultural biases. These divisions wield the same sentimental and structural sway that racial divides do in our society today. The chasm between the Jews and the proselytes was particularly pronounced. The prevailing attitudes among many Jews toward Gentiles were largely influenced by the historical oppression they had endured and their anxieties about the rising trend of mixed marriages. This deep-seated fear and division underscore the relevance of these issues, reminding us of the importance of unity and understanding in overcoming societal barriers.

Dunn (2009) challenges earlier scholarly assumptions by emphasizing that the real distinction between Hellenists and Hebrews is rooted in culture and language rather than theology – an insight that has gained widespread acceptance and is now considered irrefutable. Following Dunn's compelling argument, it becomes evident that cultural dynamics, particularly language, played a crucial role in the marginalization of Hellenistic Jews by their Hebrew brothers. This cultural imbalance manifested in the church's humanitarian initiatives, where support was disproportionately directed towards Hebraic or Jerusalem Jews, leaving Hellenistic Jews largely overlooked. Such inequitable treatment led to rising discontent and murmurs within the community, prompting the apostles to critically reassess and restructure the church's social outreach efforts. Previously, these efforts had favoured only a segment of the congregation, perpetuating division.

Analysis and application of the Text

The passage under scrutiny highlights a significant conflict between Greek-speaking Jews, known as Hellenists, and Hebrew and Aramaic-speaking Jews, referred to as Hebrews. Central to this conflict is the troubling allegation of discriminatory treatment towards the Hellenist widows during the daily food distribution. In Acts 6:1-7, the apostles faced complaints from the Hellenists about the oversight of their widows during the daily distribution of food. The apostles' disregard for the needs of the Hellenist widows revealed a significant oversight in their grasp of the community's priorities. This situation underscored the urgent need for reform and the introduction of new leadership to ensure that all voices and needs are adequately addressed. Understanding the urgency of the matter, they wisely prompted the congregation to choose seven dedicated individuals to take charge of this important responsibility. This decision not only addressed the needs of the community but also allowed the apostles to concentrate fully on their vital mission of preaching, ensuring that both service and spiritual guidance could thrive.

Pao (2011) noted that the seven selected leaders identified by the apostles possessed ethical, spiritual, and managerial characteristics. He equally suggested that the writer's decision to include this passage represented an acknowledgment of the need for successors to the apostles. Pao (2011) asserted that this transformation marks a pivotal shift in leadership, largely influenced by Peter and the other apostles' reluctance to fully engage with the elements of Jesus' mission that championed the marginalized.

The challenge of inequality transcends history; it is a pressing issue in today's Nigerian society. The church today is guilty of various forms of nepotism, which often reflect ethnocultural bias. This has led to schisms in various places at different times. Cuilla (2014) highlights a critical concern that organizations often become so fixated on a single group of stakeholders, like shareholders, that they fail to recognize how their actions ripple through the wider community. Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011)

further emphasize this point by revealing that leaders may not be as ethical as they think, resulting in decisions that adversely impact others. For Christian leaders committed to answering Scripture's call to reach every individual, this blind spot can undermine their effectiveness and purpose. It is imperative to learn how to lead with equity and inclusion, embodying the Christian principles of community and service. In our diverse world, organizations – including churches – must take a proactive approach to ensure that they genuinely represent and include all stakeholders (Grissom, 2018). This commitment not only enhances their moral standing but also enriches their mission, fostering unity and collaboration in a time when it is most needed.

A close look at Acts 6:1-7 highlights a compelling reformist perspective. This viewpoint asserts that the corruption of our world stems from dysfunctional social structures, emphasizing that true change begins with a fundamental reform of these systems (Robbins, 1996). Furthermore, Henson et al. (2020) argue that this vital transformation can be achieved through the application of divine insights, empowering us to reshape the current system in ways that lead to meaningful and positive outcomes. By embracing this approach, we can work towards a better, more just world.

Acts 6:1-7 poignantly illustrates the complexities of cross-cultural conflict and emphasizes the proactive role that the apostles took in addressing these challenges. Eze and Agbo (2023) highlight that churches that embrace biblical conflict resolution principles within their leadership are more likely to rebound swiftly from divisions and experience a revitalization of spiritual energy. By anchoring their strategies in the apostolic wisdom of Acts 6, churches today can create a thriving atmosphere that encourages harmony, inclusiveness, and a strong sense of community. Embracing these principles is not just beneficial; it is essential for nurturing a vibrant, united church life. The text under study serves as a compelling framework for understanding how the ethical stance of Christian leaders can significantly shape their responses to issues of inclusion. By examining this text, we can uncover vital insights into the leadership qualities necessary for fostering unity and acceptance within our diverse communities.

Conclusion

The narrative in Acts 6:1–7 serves as a powerful reminder of the church's responsibility to tackle crises with Spirit-led leadership, inclusivity, and thoughtful structural reorganization. Many challenges within churches stem from issues like tribalism or ethnic strife, marginalization, leadership competition, doctrinal disagreements, and administrative injustices. Such internal turmoil not only undermines church unity but also stifles spiritual growth and damages the church's reputation. The approach taken by the early church, as portrayed in Acts 6, presents a compelling model for addressing the complex challenges facing modern congregations. It underscores the significance of discernment, effective delegation, and attentive pastoral care. Emphasizing transparency in leadership, responsible delegation, and a commitment to social justice are essential steps in cultivating unity and fostering impactful ministry in today's church environment.

Churches, especially those in Nigeria, stand to gain invaluable insights from this model espoused in Acts 6: 1 – 7. By ensuring that leadership appointments are not only reflective of spiritual maturity but also embrace the diversity of the church community, we can effectively tackle underlying conflicts and foster a spirit of reconciliation. Now is the time for the church to embrace these principles, transforming both its internal dynamics and its external impact.

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