

Speaker 1:

It is time for a pause in your day. Welcome to a podcast where we press the pause button on our busy lives for a few moments, and we focus on God's word with Sharon and Nicole. We pray this is a time of refreshing for you. The Sweet Selah Moments Podcast is a cooperative production of Word Radio and Sweet Selah Ministries.

Nicole:

Welcome to Sweet Selah Moments. This is episode 135, Growing Pains. Have you ever experienced growing pains? I have. When I was a little girl, I would wake up crying because my legs hurt so bad and my dad would come in and rub them for me so I could fall back asleep. Now, as an adult, I've had different growing pains: growing into motherhood, and now helping my children grow into teen years as little women. It can be painful most days, trying to think ahead of all these girls and what they may need, and figuring out ways to guide and teach them to be kind and productive members of society. Oy. It's hard to learn to think less of me and what I want to do with my day, and remember to look to God for help instead of trying to do it all on my own. Sharon, how about you? Are there growing pains at your age and stage of life?

Sharon:

There sure are, and it's so kind of fun to have you take it from childhood, 'cause I'm gonna bring it to really old age.

Nicole:

We'll cover all of it.

Sharon:

Right. Which is not where I am at yet, but oh where I am headed. I am so blessed with a mother who wants to prepare me for very old age.

Nicole:

Well, that's lovely of her.

Sharon:

She's still helping me, Nicole. (Nicole: Oh) she's teaching me things. She doesn't like me to stay a long time to like talk for four hours or so anymore and she gently says, in her little British way, when you get older, dear, your brains cannot handle the concentration necessary for a conversation. And then she reminds me that Billy Graham could only handle an hour of talking towards the end of his life. And so I stay two hours and we have wonderful talk and I can tell by the end, she's almost 90, that her brains wanna break. And it is not me. It is not like, oh, I just wish this daughter of mine would leave, she's boring, you know? She just can't do it. And the other day she said to me, you know, when I was taking care of your grandfather, he told me that I needed to make the bed less tightly because it was hurting his feet. (Oh) And she said, to this day, I'm ashamed of myself. I thought, how on the earth could tight sheets hurt feet? What a ridiculous thing to say. And I don't know any other way to make a bed. She said, guess what? The sheets hurt my feet. (Aw, that's so cute) I know. I just keep thinking to myself, there's even growing pains in old age. Trying to express needs that seem weird to people in different stages of life. You know? And I would never consider that when I'm making a bed for a very old person, I shouldn't, you know, make the hospital corners.

Nicole:

Right. Makes it tight and tidy. Yeah.

Sharon:

Yeah. It wouldn't even make sense to me. But she very gently is teaching me. And I am so blessed that I have the kind of mummy that's teaching me how to take care of her. And then also how I can teach my daughters how to take care of me.

Nicole:

Oh, that's so wise.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

She's a good mummy.

Sharon:

Oh my goodness, she really is. So, so basically, as long as God gives us breath, we have the ability to grow and change.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And we have growing pains.

Nicole:

Oh, sure.

Sharon:

And it's actually a good thing, you know? We have to, we have to grow and change. I had such an epic fail not long ago,

Nicole:

I love these.

Sharon:

Oh man, where I had to grow up again. Everything went wrong at an airport. And due to no fault of our own Ray, and I missed a flight and had to go to the expense of getting a pet friendly hotel, 'cause we had Bella with us, (Nicole: Oh, Bella) on no notice waiting for the next flight, which wasn't until the following day. And Nicole, instead of praying and saying, Lord, help me to shine in this Lord, help me to be gracious to the airline officials that actually cost us our flight, help me to give them grace. Right? (Right) I was so crabby, I sulked, I felt sorry for myself. I was icily polite, and I thought later, I'm actually glad they didn't know I was a Christian. And what a terrible thing to say.

Nicole:

Oh, I know.

Sharon:

Because I wasn't shining for the Lord. And it was all because I didn't pray in the middle of a hard thing. So I had a painful experience, a growing pain. And God in his grace has given me several difficult situations since so I can practice,

Nicole:

You can practice. Yeah.

Sharon:

Going to him in prayer and saying, okay, okay, you know how I did it wrong at the airport three weeks ago? I'm gonna do it right this time. Lord, come into me. Fill me with your Spirit so that what comes out is grace and not my natural self, which is to be kind of crappy when I don't get my way.

Nicole:

I think we're all bent a little that way. But don't you love how he's such a kind parent? He's such a kind Father. Like we would teach our little girl. I have a daughter who loves to bake and she's tried to make pancakes a couple times with disastrous results. She did salt instead of sugar too much and they've been awful. But instead of just yelling at her, oh no, you can't make pancakes, you're terrible. We take the time to teach them to do it again.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

But God's so kind. Even though we're like, why do we have to do this hard situation again God, that was not fun? But you're right, there's growing pains, there's teaching moments.

Sharon:

Yeah. And they're for our good.

Nicole:

They are.

Sharon:

And even when your little calves were sore and your father was helping you and all that stuff, everything that happens to us, the growing pains were to make your legs grow.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And make you be an adult.

Nicole:

Exactly.

Sharon:

Right. So it had a purpose. So.

Nicole:

It does.

Sharon:

All right. Well, today we are going to look at the growing pains of the newly formed church in Acts and then just start the amazing story of Stephen, one of the first martyrs of our faith. So let's read through the whole chapter of Acts 6 first, which is where we are today. And then let's dive deep and talk about it all. So

Nicole:

I love it. All right. So I'm gonna start with verse one of chapter six. "But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek speaking believers complained about the Hebrew speaking believers saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food."

Sharon:

"So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, we Apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program."

Nicole:

"And so brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility."

Sharon:

"Then we Apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."

Nicole:

"Everyone liked this idea and they chose the following. Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicholas of Antioch, an earlier convert to the Jewish faith."

Sharon:

"These seven were presented to the Apostles who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them."

Nicole:

"So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem. And many of the Jewish priests were converted too."

Sharon:

"Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people."

Nicole:

"But one day, some men from the synagogue of freed slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia."

Sharon:

"None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke."

Nicole:

"So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen saying, we heard him blaspheme Moses and even God."

Sharon:

"This roused the people, the elders and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council."

Nicole:

"The lying witnesses said, this man is always speaking against the holy temple and against the law of Moses."

Sharon:

"We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

Nicole:

"At this point, everyone in the high council stared at Stephen because his face became as bright as an angel's."

Sharon:

Man!

Nicole:

Ooh, that's a showstopper.

Sharon:

I know, I know. At a glowing face. Wow. Wow, wow. Well, we're gonna actually start with the church's growing pains. And then we're gonna come back to Stephen and actually the next few podcasts will be about him. So, Nicole, breaking it down verse by verse, I think is the best way to go 'cause every verse has so much in it. So I'm gonna start with verse one and read it and then talk about it.

Nicole:

Sounds good.

Sharon:

How's that?

Nicole:

I love it.

Sharon:

Alright, let's do it. So chapter six, verse one. "But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent." (The growing pains) The Greek speaking believers complained about the Hebrew speaking believers saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food." So basically we're at, that's not fair. Right? And of course the Greeks would feel slighted 'cause they're not Jewish. I mean, you know, come on, but in my mind, they've been flooded with new believers. Right? (Nicole: Sure) There were 3000 the first day, then 5,000 more added. There's an awful lot of widows now to take care of. Right. (That's right) And because Christianity doesn't look for, you know, the wealthy donors, they look for the poor, (Right) the disenfranchised, the weak. (Right) There's a disproportionate amount of poor, disenfranchised and weak and widowed people.

Nicole:

That come.

Sharon:

Right. Right. So this is a overwhelming responsibility.

Nicole:

Oh, sure.

Sharon:

And of course it probably wasn't fair, but I don't know that it was intentional. It's just like, I mean, what would we do if Eliot Baptist Church grew by 5,000 people?

Nicole:

Oh, my word. I don't even know.

Sharon:

I don't either.

Nicole:

You'd be so focused on like, we don't have enough chairs that you wouldn't be worrying about every little issue all at once.

Sharon:

Exactly. And all this clump of new poor people with needs. Right?

Nicole:

Right. Definitely overwhelming.

Sharon:

So, yeah. So anyways, in conclusion, they were overwhelmed.

Nicole:

Yeah. To say it lightly. So verse two, it says, "So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, we Apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program". So that's interesting. So I love that they called a meeting of the believers. So they did the right thing. They gathered everyone. And they clearly stated their calling again, like we've been called to preach. We have been called to teach, we're not called to run the food program.

Sharon:

Right. Right.

Nicole:

So that's probably why things aren't going great right now, because this is not our, our gifting. So they kind of acknowledge their weakness, but they highlight what they feel like God has called them to do.

Sharon:

Yeah. I think it's so good that they didn't try to do it all. (Nicole: Oh yeah) You can't do it all. (No) No. I mean, there's so many needs you'd never sleep.

Nicole:

Right. Right. And they would neglect what God has called them to.

Sharon:

Yeah. So. Their calling. Yeah, so good. Verse three. "And so brothers select," (So he's telling them to even do the selecting process, that's so interesting. I just noticed that. He's called, they called the believers together. So you guys) "Select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility." I just so love these qualifications. No resume on food distribution experience. Right. Well, this guy has knowledge about widowhood or whatever.

Nicole:

Oh sure.

Sharon:

The qualifications all are to do with character and with their walk with the Lord. They're well respected.

Nicole:

Great point. Yeah.

Sharon:

Yeah. So they're, you know, if they're well respected, they're not foolish people that fly off the handle at the drop of a hat or anything. They're well respected. They're full of the Spirit. So they're yielded, they're yielded men that are yielded to the Holy Spirit.

Nicole:

Who will listen to God.

Sharon:

Yes. That is the most primary characteristic you wanna look for in a Christian organization, is not the skillset. (Nicole: Right) It's are they a yielded vessel to the Lord God? Really.

Nicole:

That's a great point.

Sharon:

Because from that comes wisdom.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

So, and so there we go. That's how they made choices. And I feel like we should copy them.

Nicole:

Yes. That's very smart. So verse four says, "Then we Apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word". So again, it's just really good that they recognize their place, they recognize the need. They didn't say, oh, this isn't for us. You guys figure it out. They made a plan, they helped delegate, Hey, pick seven men. They presented a good plan, but they gave it to someone else to work through it. (Sharon: Yeah) So they knew their limitations. They were wise with what God had given them. I just think that was really smart.

Sharon:

It was.

Nicole:

Because God didn't call them to do everything everywhere.

Sharon:

No, no. And that is the only way you survive 5,000 new people joining you really quickly.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Is delegation.

Nicole:

Because twelve disciples taking care of 5,000 plus people?

Sharon:

Impossible. Exactly. So.

Nicole:

No way.

Sharon:

So, yeah. Well, fortunately, verse five, everyone liked this idea.

Nicole:

It ends well.

Sharon:

And they chose the following, Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. He's the one that gets a parentheses and like a description. Because we're going to go from this sort of general talk to a very specific focus on Stephen in a little bit. But we first meet Stephen here. He was one of the well-respected men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom chosen by the believers for outstanding-ness and serving the widows in this way.

Nicole:

That's pretty neat.

Sharon:

And then Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicholas of Antioch, who by the way, was an earlier convert to the Jewish faith. (Excuse me)

Nicole:

Kind of a fun little tidbit.

Sharon:

A second little parentheses there. So he was twice converted.

Nicole:

I know. I was thinking that like, oh, that's kind of interesting for him to come to become a Jew and then to kind of turn again to become a Christian. Like that must have been quite a turning.

Sharon:

Yeah. That's really kind of fun. That Nicholas got the full deal.

Nicole:

He did.

Sharon:

He got to be Jewish first and then a Christian Jew.

Nicole:

That's kind of cool.

Sharon:

So, it was just fun to see their names and think, oh my goodness, when I get to heaven, I'd love the story of Procorus 'cause he had a story.

Nicole:

Right. How many widows did you get to help? That's kind of neat.

Sharon:

Yeah. And were they all happy?

Nicole:

Right. Were they thankful for the food? All right. So verse six says, "These seven were presented to the Apostles who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them" Oh, I love that. They're still involved in the process, doing what God had called them to do, which was to pray and to preach the word of God. (Sharon: Yes) And so they were doing again, what they were called to do and doing it well.

Sharon:

They were, they were,

Nicole:

They prayed over these men. It seems like sometimes, you know, well, I'm the toe and I'm better than the finger or the thumb in the body of Christ. But just because they were the twelve Apostles who were preaching and praying, they still kind of commissioned and sent these men doing (Sharon: Yes) maybe what was seen as lesser work of giving food to widows. (True) It's not as glamorous as going around and being seen, one would think, but they still prayed for them and kind of sent them into this area of service with like God's hand of blessing on them.

Sharon:

I love that too. I really do. There was a holiness of that sendoff. And it glorified what they were doing. It made it important. This is important enough that we're laying hands on you to do this job. Right.

Nicole:

I just think that's so neat. They did a good job with that.

Sharon:

So nice. Yeah. So verse seven. "So God's message continued to spread." Why? Because the Apostles weren't trying to do all the things. (Nicole: Yes) That's why, because they did not have to micromanage and be in control of everything. They were free to continue to preach the word. And so God's message continued to spread and the numbers of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem. This is a good thing they had the seven guys on board. (Yeah) And this little line, the last part of verse seven says, "And many of the Jewish priests were converted too". (That's neat) Isn't that the happiest thing? (It is) You know, 'cause sometimes you're like, how come all these religious leaders don't get it when they're studying Isaiah 53? (Right) And other texts. But they did. And I think some of, and I've said this before, I think some of the priests that were at the temple when the veil split in two (Oh yeah) when Jesus died and there was an earthquake and the world went dark for three hours, hello, (It's pretty profound) pretty profound right there, started their journey then. And then as they hear these unlearned fisherman showing them from scripture that Jesus is the Suffering Servant that Isaiah specifically predicted, they humbled themselves and said we were wrong. (Wow) Isn't that lovely?

Nicole:

That's just so nice to know, 'cause you do kind of, are like, those poor religious leaders. Like they just didn't get it. Like they're always like, you heathens, you snakes.

Sharon:

Yes. Those bad religious leaders.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Yeah. Well, some of them said I was wrong and they came.

Nicole:

That's nice.

Sharon:

I don't know. Made me happy. So, all right. So now we're gonna move from that general discussion on how to better organize the church to one specific man in the church. And he was one of the guys appointed to distribute the food. So the cool thing is every single man on that list has a story including Procorus, who now I'm gonna look up in heaven.

Nicole:

Find him in the registry.

Sharon:

Yes. Some get more press than others but every one of us has a story with ups, downs, adventures and trials. And God knows every story and helps every one of us. Isn't that just the stunning-est thing?

Nicole:

It's so beautiful.

Sharon:

With every chapter. Oh man. So our story for us in the podcast for now and the next couple ahead, is this amazing, dedicated, passionate lover of Jesus, Stephen. Man, he's a guy. So let's divide the verses up again. And Nicole, why don't you start with verse eight and let's get to know Stephen.

Nicole:

Okay. "So Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power performed amazing miracles and signs among the people." So here he is full of God's grace and power. He was performing some of the same signs and miracles as the Twelve, you know, the original disciples. So that's interesting that they noted that.

Sharon:

Mm-Hmm. I think it's so cool that he did that. So he wasn't just distributing food, (Nicole: Right) which is very important. . Maybe he was healing a couple of widows while he was feeding them.

Nicole:

Right. He was, clearly God was with him.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

He was a surrendered man.

Sharon:

Yeah. So good. Hah, but here's where it gets sad.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

"But one day, some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia." I was so fascinated by Synagogue of Freed Slaves.

Nicole:

I know. I was like, I'm gonna look that up and see why it's called that.

Sharon:

That is so fascinating. There's a lot of speculation. (Nicole: Yeah). It's not mentioned elsewhere, so you're just like, you're guessing. (Yeah) But the primary guess as I read different commentaries on it, was that they were freed Roman slaves who had banded together because of their shared experience. (That's interesting). Yeah. Freed Roman Jewish slaves, 'cause they're you know? (Right). And so they're clearly up for the debate. I wonder if once you've been freed, you're a little pushier, 'cause you're, I'm not gonna be enslaved again.

Nicole:

Right. So you guard things closer.

Sharon:

There might be a bit of a chip on the shoulder, you know? (Nicole: Yeah) And that might be part of the reason why they're like, wait a second. What are you doing to our faith? I'm free now I can talk to you about this.

Nicole:

Oh, they didn't, they were afraid of being taken back in even in a religious entrapment sort of thing.

Sharon:

Maybe.

Nicole:

Maybe. Yeah. Because they were very ready to fight him on this.

Sharon:

They were very ready to fight him. They were. Yeah.

Nicole:

All right. So verse 10 says, "None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit within which Stephen spoke". So God is with him. It's not just Stephen saying the great words he heard his friends say or just kind of off the cuff. God is clearly speaking through this man.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

These are God's words coming out of Stephen's mouth. This is not Stephen.

Sharon:

Exactly so.

Nicole:

Because how many of us can say that nothing coming out of our mouth is bad, it's just all wisdom in the Spirit of God. Like that's, that's a rare day.

Sharon:

It's a very rare day. It's a rare minute.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Man. So there he is. They couldn't stand up against him. So what do they do? They persuade some men to lie. So this is verse 11. I should maybe read it. "So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen saying, We heard him blaspheme Moses and even God." So now they've gone from just debating to being wrong.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

It's like we're gonna win this argument at any cost, even if we have to lie to do it. And that's just wrong.

Nicole:

It is. That's sad.

Sharon:

There you go. Yeah.

Nicole:

It's just wrong. Verse 12. "This roused the people, the elders and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high court." So I feel like they were a little defensive and definitely in the wrong, because if you have to resort to breaking God's laws, like do not lie is one of the big ones.

Sharon:

It is.

Nicole:

The Big Ten. One of the Ten Commandments. If you have to resort to sin in order to win your argument or your point, you know that that's not right.

Sharon:

It's not right.

Nicole:

They had to be underhanded in order to rouse up the people and the elders. And it just, it's sad to see that happening against poor Stephen.

Sharon:

It really is. Reminds me of Jesus, falsely accused. (Nicole: Yes). Dragged before the council, you know? Verse 13, "The lying witnesses said, this man is always speaking against the holy temple and against the law of Moses." So same basic charges as Jesus had, misinterpreting things Jesus said that Stephen probably was just repeating what Jesus said. And they're getting the same kind of false understanding. (Right) False understanding of it.

Nicole:

So verse 14 continues, "We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the temple and change the customs Moses handed down to them". And I put the same thing. This is all the same stuff they accused Jesus of. This is the same fear. They don't really have ground to stand on against Jesus and his coming. They just kind of keep sticking to this one little, you know, this one thing that they heard. Oh, he is gonna tear down the temple and destroy our law. Because that's all they have. It's what they know. The temple and the law feels safe. It's that legalism of, I follow the rules and I can be good enough.

Sharon:

Mm-Hmm. Yep. And it's a guaranteed rabble-rouser cry. Nobody wants that temple destroyed.

Nicole:

No. It's sacred to them.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. So here we go again. Right? Man.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

So then this very fascinating verse 15. "At this point, everyone in the high council stared at Stephen because his face became as bright as an angel's." This verse seems to come out of the blue.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

They're having this argument. And all of a sudden, la--- there's Stephen with a shining face.

Nicole:

He's shining. That's funny.

Sharon:

Stephen himself must have been bewildered at first at this, it's gotta have been, you know how when the Holy Spirit first came, there was a fire on everybody's head. I feel like there was a whoosh of an infilling of the Spirit there that made him glow. (Nicole: Yeah) You know, God was giving him, 'cause God knew what was about to happen to him, which was (Nicole: Oh, I know) (Sharon: PS spoiler alert) not going to be pleasant. And he knew that he needed, in his weakness, God's power in him. So he starts to glow. So God fills him in a very special way. So it's almost like he's removed from the pettiness of everything that people are doing around him. (Right) And he's already in the joy of the Lord. The strength of God is whooshing through him. (Yeah) And I'm imagining, this is imagination, I'm imagining that it goes from sharp words that Stephen's feeling that are bruising his spirit to being so filled with the joy of the Lord that you just are watching their mouths move. (Oh, yeah, like, just kinda blurs to a little sound) You know, Lord, you are here with me. Wow. You are really here with me.

Nicole:

Am I glowing?

Sharon:

This is so cool. And it is my fondest wish and prayer that if ever I am placed in a point of severe persecution, could I please have what Stephen had?

Nicole:

Can I glow for a minute?

Sharon:

Yes. Yes. So that I have the strength I need in the weakness.

Nicole:

Yes. To get through it.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

You know what's really neat? The only other person this happened to was Moses. When the glory of God came on Moses and his face was, they couldn't look on upon him. (Sharon: Yeah, yeah) So Moses and Stephen got this really special moment where the Holy Spirit like literally shone, the glory of God shone through. And it's almost like God was just putting like all the chaos and all the bickering back and forth, he just quietly just gives his stamp of approval on Stephen, like you said, kind of wraps him in this little glowing hug.

Sharon:

Yes, little bubble.

Nicole:

Like this is my little servant I'm pleased with.

Sharon:

Man!

Nicole:

Just a really powerful, beautiful moment. Like a calm in a storm.

Sharon:

It is. And wait til we see next week what Stephen's gonna do with it while he's filled with the Spirit. My goodness. So, okay. So that is our lesson for today. The Growing Pains. And actually what happens to Stephen is part of the growing pains too.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And we'll see that because, you know, when somebody dies for their faith, everybody else that has the same faith starts to go, oh, do I wanna, do I really believe this? (Nicole: Yeah) 'Cause it could lead to my death. (Right) Yeah. Which we have people all over the world that face that. (Yes) When they choose Christ, they know they could be choosing a very premature death. Yeah. So, all right, well let's go on to our favorite verses and why. So what's your favorite verse out of all these amazing verses?

Nicole:

There's a lot. There was a lot in here. I settled, I kept going back to verse 10. It said none of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke. So they had to resort to lying about him. 'cause Stephen was walking with God so closely. He was surrendered and he had wisdom for God that he allowed the Spirit to work through him, and no one could find anything to say against him. They had to lie to find something against this man.

Sharon:

Yeah. Isn't that neat?

Nicole:

That was so encouraging. I wanna be so close with God. And so in tuned with him that people have to make up lies. Like when you first read that, I was like, oh, they're lying about him. That's awful. Poor Stephen. But then it was this shift of wow, he was such an upright man, so close to his Jesus that they had to lie to find something to accuse him of. Like, I want that faith.

Sharon:

That kind of faith. Exactly. Exactly so. It reminds me of Daniel where they're like, well, we can't find anything wrong with Daniel so we're gonna have to get him in trouble for praying. Yeah.

Nicole:

Right. I know. Like, that's a great way to be found out to be.

Sharon:

Isn't It? Yeah, exactly. May people have to lie about me in order to get me.

Nicole:

Yeah. I know.

Sharon:

So, well, mine was verse 15. We can be in the hardest situations and yet still feel his peace. And joy. (Nicole: Yeah) Because God can come upon us (Yes) in such a special way. So I love that verse. (That's so good) So yeah. Okay. So what did I learn about God from this passage? Well, God is able to grow things rapidly if he chooses to, and then God is able to give us joy even in the hardest times. I just love that in the midst of hard it can be still good. (Yes) Yeah. And I've had times in my life where that has happened. (Yes) So, wonderful. How about you?

Nicole:

I love it. I put, despite all that Satan threw at that early church, the number of believers still grew. He tried several different tactics and now he's trying to stir up fighting in the church and they still continue to grow.

Sharon:

Tah dah!

Nicole:

I love that.

Sharon:

That's right.

Nicole:

That God doesn't get derailed by our problems.

Sharon:

Nope. He doesn't. Nope. If God has a plan, the plan will happen.

Nicole:

It's gonna go through. Yeah.

Sharon:

That's right.

Nicole:

And then I put that God is with us when he calls us, that we can trust that he will shine in our weakness.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

Little play on Stephen there.

Sharon:

I like it. I'm liking it. That's awesome. And what did you learn about the early church and how we can apply it today?

Nicole:

Yeah. They did a really good job working through the problems that arose, I think they took care of it fairly quickly. They brought it up together. They didn't talk behind people's backs. It looks like they gathered all the believers and said, okay, here's the problem. Here's what we think would be a good solution. They made a plan and they solved the problem, you know? (Sharon: Yeah) And I think they had a lot of grit to work through the trouble that they first had in the beginning. (Yes) So that was good. I think they had a good method for working through trouble.

Sharon:

I loved it 'cause they weren't defensive. They're like, what? We, Jews are not, you know, being bad to you, Greek widows.

Nicole:

Right, right. They didn't try to defend themselves. They said, okay, well here's the problem. You see, here's how we could fix it.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. I like that.

Nicole:

They did a good job.

Sharon:

Yeah. So yeah, that was one of mine, that they cared for widows. And we need to do the same in our churches. And anybody that is alone. That we have to be family for them. And then they also recognized the need to share the load. And we have to always be delegating as a church as we grow.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Sharing the load and not trying to take on too much to ourselves.

Nicole:

No, that's good.

Sharon:

Boy, this was fun. All right. And it goes so fast. Man.

Nicole:

It does.

Sharon:

Okay. Well, I am gonna pray. Heavenly Father, I just so thank you for the humility of the apostles who when they were told the Jews were being unfair to the Greeks, heard it, responded in a wise and good way publicly, and appointed men to deal with it. Lord, may we learn from that when we are criticized, please give us that humility that listens, and sees where we might be at fault or where we could do better. Forgive us for how often our pride gets in the way of what we could learn if we could listen. And Father, thank you for Stephen, and as we continue to study him in the weeks ahead, would you teach us more about how to be yielded to you? In Jesus' name, Amen.

Nicole:

Amen. We hope today's chat about Acts 6 inspires you to muscle through those growing pains, seeking God's help and delighting in the fact that God cares about you and wants you to grow your faith. Maybe you even got some practical ideas for growing things in your own church. We would love to hear from you. Tell us when you listen and where, tell us what you are learning. Let's be friends. Email us at sharon@sweetselah.org. And if you want to hear from us once a month, consider becoming a monthly donor, even for \$5 a month and become a podcast partner helping us to get the word out. To donate go to sweetselah.org/donations and please come back next week for episode 136, Don't Forget to Remember. Thanks so much for listening and have a great week.

Speaker 1:

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