



## WEEKLY STUDY

### ***The Marks of a Movement - Week Seven***

We have wrapped up our summer series on the Marks of a Movement, our look at the first days of the early church. Hopefully you have seen how the movement of God has particular characteristics that are present in the church today. Consider how God has gifted and called you to participate in His world-changing, people-redeeming movement today!

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,  
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit [prov.church/smallgroups](http://prov.church/smallgroups).

#### Prayer Focus:

- Continue in prayer for students, teachers and administrators for the year ahead.
- Pray for those who feel overlooked and forgotten in our world and in our church.

## DAILY STUDY

### **MONDAY: ACTS 6.1-7 (NIV)**

*In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.<sup>2</sup> So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables."<sup>3</sup> Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them<sup>4</sup> and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."*

<sup>5</sup> This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. <sup>6</sup> They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

- The early church leaders became aware of a need in the community. Greek-speaking Jews were those who had lived much or all of their lives outside of Palestine and had now returned. Some, (like Nicolas) were converts to Judaism. Perhaps because of relocation and the unsettling of generations living in the same area, there were many widows among them who had no one else and needed care. How this need was met was very important. Instead of entering a spiral of blame and division, the apostles gathered all of the disciples. They sought to empower seven men who were filled with Spirit and wisdom to care for the widows. It was a great solution that allowed the movement to continue without turning in on itself. Have you experienced challenges in your community that led to division? Who are the problem solvers in your community? Where have you been empowered to serve?
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- **Prayer Prompt: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10.45)**
- *God, allow me to hear the calling of the church. Fit me and humble me to do my part in the expansion of your Kingdom movement in these days. Amen.*

## TUESDAY: NUMBERS 14.1-4 (NIV)

*That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. <sup>2</sup> All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” <sup>4</sup> And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”*

- This grumbling was a common theme especially in the years of wilderness wandering for God’s people. As bad as things actually were in the past, at least it was a known existence. The promised land to which they were going seemed too far off. What is the promised land to which followers of Jesus are headed? Are there times when it seems like it’s too far off? Do you ever long for the “old days”? Who or what helps you to stay focused on the promised land of God?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! (James 5.9)**
  - *God, forgive me for my grumbling. I am so thankful for all that you have done for me. I look to the promised land of heaven and commit myself to point to the signs of heaven here on earth. Amen.*

### **WEDNESDAY: PHILLIPIANS 2.14-18 (NIV)**

*Do everything without grumbling or arguing,<sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky<sup>16</sup> as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.<sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.<sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*

- These words come on the heels of a beautiful description of the example of Christ. He was humble and self-sacrificing. He was obedient to God even on the cross of his suffering. Children of God who commit to live together without grumbling or arguing will shine like stars in the sky! With that promise before us, we can walk forward together through difficult things, even times of suffering, in unity of gladness and rejoicing. What does it mean to be "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation?"
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- **Prayer Prompt: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."<sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5.14-16)**
- *O God, I want to take on the character and mind of Jesus. May I become more like him as I live in Christian community today. Make me, make us, to shine like the stars in the sky! Amen.*

### **THURSDAY: ACTS 6.5-6 (NIV)**

*They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.<sup>6</sup> They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

- We return to a portion of our original text today to notice who these men were that were chosen to serve and care for the widows in the community. They were Greek men, even recent converts to Judaism. The argument was breaking out among groups who had different perspectives. Each perspective was important in ensuring that the whole community was cared for and loved as Christ loves the church. The issue that had come to light was the potential neglect of widows who could not care for themselves. These men were called and equipped to wait upon the needs of those who were in need. The word for “wait” is related to the word of the office and role of “deacon” which has remained in many parts of the church ever since. As you look around your Christian community today, who are those who seem particularly called to the roles of caring for those in need? Is it you?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,  
extol him who rides on the clouds;  
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.  
⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,  
is God in his holy dwelling. (Psalm 68.4-5)**
- *Lord God, Reveal to me the places you have called me to serve. Give me eyes to see those who suffer in silence, and give me wisdom, along with your church, to meet their needs. Amen.*

## **FRIDAY: LUKE 4.16-21 (NIV)**

*He stood up to read,<sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

<sup>18</sup> *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

<sup>20</sup> *Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

- This was Jesus' mission statement. It was his purpose and calling. The apostles in Acts were learning what it meant to stay on mission as well. The church was growing so rapidly that they didn't have time to attend leadership conferences and discuss "best practices". Instead, they had to rely on God's guidance and the equipping of others. They had to release power and celebrate the roles of the whole community. The body of Christ on earth (the church) was beginning to look like a powerful force. Have you ever had an opportunity to discern and express God's purpose for your life? Take some time to put words to the ways you see God using you.
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- **Prayer Prompt: we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. (2 Thessalonians 1.11)**
- *God, thank you for the calling that you have placed on my life. Help me to see it and grasp it. Help me to live into that particular calling within the body of Christ. Amen.*

## **SATURDAY: GENESIS 1.1-4 (NIV)**

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

*<sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.*

- Have you ever thought about what it means to order your life around your faith in Jesus? As you look at your days and weeks ahead, what things would you say your life is ordered around? God is a God of order, He brought order to chaos, He separated light from darkness! He can bring order to your life as well. Spend some time today lifting up the different areas of your life, those that are in line with your faith in Jesus, and those that seem a bit more chaotic. God can work with it all!
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- **Prayer Prompt: The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;  
<sup>24</sup> though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand. (Psalm 37.23-24)**
- *God, Would you so order my steps that my own failed attempts would fall in line with your very best for my life. I want to be formed by and into the image of Christ today. Amen.*

## GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob shared these three questions to help us think about the implications for living into our calling. Spend some time discussing it as a group. What follow up will be needed between now and your next meeting?

GROWTH leads to PROBLEMS leads to COMPLAINING leads to PLANS THAT ARE PLEASING.

1. Do you know your priorities?

-Have you identified what your mission is? What are you specifically called to do in the life of the church?

2. Are you willing to empower others?

-Who are you actively giving your power to in order to lead in times of growth?

3. Are you ordering your life around the things of God?

-What do these indicators say about what you are ordering your life around?

Calendar

Finances

Relationships

Sabbath

Daily Prayer

-What areas need attention? What actions or changes would you like to be held accountable for?