



GROWING PAINS

SUMMARY | In the life of a church—whether in the first century or today—growing pains are inevitable. We may not embrace this at first—who likes pain of any kind? But in reality, we often grow best through pain, don't we?

Financial pain teaches us to manage our money with an eye on God's directives. Relational pain shapes our character. Physical pain develops dependency on God's provision. And church pain can bring about resiliency, relational growth in the local church, and outreach to those who don't yet know Jesus.

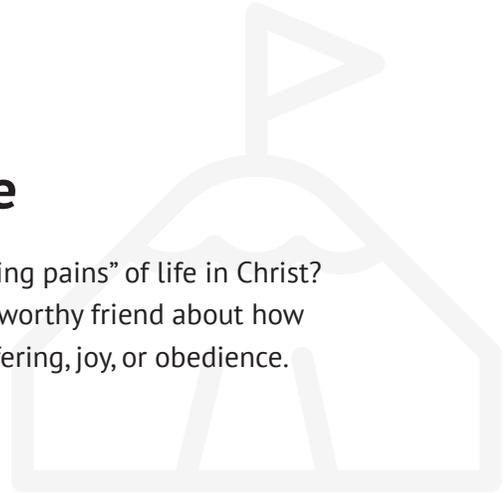
In [Acts 6](#), we see how God used struggles to grow the church internally as His people, and then externally to bring others to know Jesus. How might God do the same in our churches—and in us?

This Week's Discussion Questions

1. Read [Acts 6:1–2](#). Describe the situation the early church faced. Why does it matter?
2. Read [Acts 6:2–5](#). What solution did the twelve apostles come up with?
3. The story of Stephen is a story of how the church grew through suffering.
 - a. How is Stephen described in [Acts 6:5, 8–15](#)?
 - b. Read also [Acts 8:1–4](#). What happened to Stephen, and to the church?
4. The story of Philip is a story of how the church grew through joy. Read [Acts 6:5–6 and 8:5–8, 26–40](#). Where do you see joy as a tool for growth?
5. Overall, the early church grew through obedience. Read [Acts 6:1–7](#). Consider the rest of the “Seven.” How did their obedience, and the obedience of the church, bring about growth?

Challenge

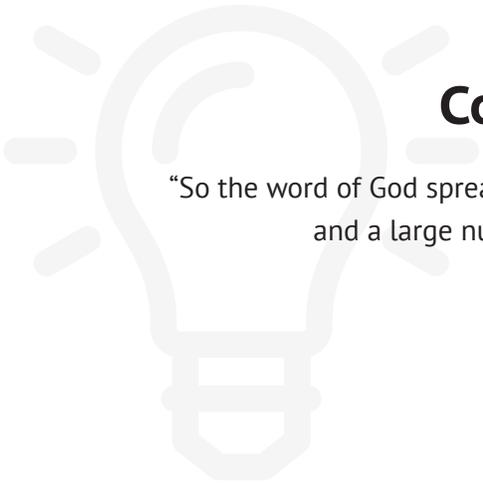
Where might you be experiencing the “growing pains” of life in Christ?
Take a moment to journal or talk to a trustworthy friend about how
God is inviting you to cooperate with suffering, joy, or obedience.



Commit To Memory

“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.”

[Acts 6:7](#)



Prayer

Oh God, open my eyes to see the needs in my own church and open my heart to
become a part of Your solutions, even when involvement may bring about growing
pains. Through the challenges of suffering, joy, and obedience, may our church grow
closer to You and widen in our outreach. In Jesus’ name and for His glory, Amen.

