

The Book of Acts, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: The Seven Chosen and Stephen's Witness

Acts 6:1-15

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Acts 6:1-15 shows the church handling internal conflict with wisdom and raising up servants to meet practical needs, while keeping the ministry of the word central. What is doctrinally at stake includes the priority of prayer and the word for those who lead, the character qualifications for service in the church, the value of practical service to the vulnerable, the unity of the body, and, as Stephen's witness begins, the Spirit-empowered boldness of faithful witnesses and the world's opposition to the truth, including the first hints that in Christ the old order of temple and law is being fulfilled.

The heaviest doctrinal weight falls on Stephen's Spirit-given wisdom and witness and the false charges concerning the temple and the law, which begin to surface the great truth that the Old Covenant finds its fulfillment in Christ, a theme Stephen will develop fully in the next chapter. Teach this carefully and set it up well.

Yet aim at the heart. This passage calls students to humble service, to good character, to guarding unity, to keeping the word and prayer central, and to courageous witness whatever the cost. Help them become the kind of people the church can entrust with responsibility, and the kind of witnesses who shine even under accusation.

Question 1

Student Question:

When the widows were being neglected, the apostles refused to abandon prayer and the ministry of the word, but appointed seven qualified men to handle the need (vv. 2-4). What does this teach us about priorities in the church and about how God's people should organize to meet real needs?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The apostles faced a genuine dilemma. The need was real and the complaint was just; widows were being neglected. But the apostles also knew their primary calling. It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables, they said. So they neither neglected the widows nor abandoned the word; they raised up others to meet the need.

This teaches an important lesson about priorities. The ministry of the word and prayer must remain central, and those called to it should not be pulled away from it to manage every

practical task. At the same time, practical needs must be genuinely met, by raising up others gifted and qualified for that service.

It also shows healthy church organization. The body is not meant to run through a few overworked leaders doing everything; it is meant to share the work, with different members serving in different roles according to their gifts. This both meets needs and protects leaders for their essential calling.

Help students see the wisdom here. A church flourishes when the word stays central, when needs are truly cared for, and when the work is shared among qualified, willing servants rather than piled on a few. This is God's design for a healthy, growing body.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The priority of prayer and the ministry of the word (v. 4)
- Genuine care for the vulnerable as essential, not optional
- Shared ministry according to gifts rather than a few doing everything
- Healthy organization that protects leaders for their calling
- Meeting real needs as part of the church's life

Discussion Prompts

- How did the apostles honor both the word and the widows?
- Why must the ministry of the word and prayer remain central?
- How should a healthy church organize to meet practical needs?

Question 2

Student Question:

The seven were chosen for humble, practical service, work that was unseen but essential (vv. 2-4). Are you willing to serve the body in ordinary, behind-the-scenes ways without recognition? Where might God be calling you to quietly meet a need?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The task given to the seven was not glamorous: overseeing the daily distribution of food to widows. Yet it was vital, and it required men full of the Spirit and wisdom. God does not divide service into important and unimportant; He values faithful service of every kind.

Many of us are drawn to visible, recognized roles and reluctant to do the humble, hidden work that keeps a church healthy, setting up, cleaning, caring for the elderly, meeting practical needs, serving where no one notices. Yet this is precisely the kind of service the gospel honors.

Jesus Himself took the form of a servant and washed His disciples' feet (John 13:1-15), teaching that greatness in His kingdom is found in serving. The willingness to do ordinary, unseen work for the good of others is a mark of Christlikeness.

Invite students to consider where they could quietly meet a need this week, no platform, no applause, just love in action. The church runs on such hidden faithfulness, and God sees and rewards what is done in secret for His sake.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The dignity and value of humble, practical service
- God valuing faithful service of every kind
- Christ's example of servanthood (John 13:1-15)
- Greatness in the kingdom found in serving

Discussion Prompts

- Are you more drawn to visible roles or willing to serve unseen?
- Why does the gospel honor humble, hidden service?
- Where could you quietly meet a need in the body this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

The church was told to choose seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom (v. 3). Why did even this practical task require people of proven character, and what does this teach about the qualifications for those who serve in the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

It is striking that overseeing food distribution required men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. God cares about the character of those who serve, even in practical roles. Competence alone was not enough; these men had to be spiritually and morally qualified.

This anticipates the qualifications the New Testament gives for servants in the church. The role of deacon, which this passage foreshadows, requires those who are dignified, not double-tongued, not greedy, holding the faith with a clear conscience, tested and proven (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Likewise elders must be above reproach (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Character is the qualification God prizes.

Why does character matter so much? Because those who serve represent Christ and influence others. A servant of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom, builds up the body; one of poor character, however gifted, can do great harm. The church entrusts responsibility to those whose lives commend the gospel.

Help students see that God's standard for service is character before competence. This is not about perfection but about proven, Spirit-shaped lives. The church should seek such people for its work, and each of us should aspire to be such a person.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Character as the chief qualification for service (v. 3)
- Good repute, fullness of the Spirit, and wisdom as requirements
- The qualifications for deacons and elders (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1)
- Character before competence in those who serve
- Servants representing Christ and influencing others

Discussion Prompts

- Why did even practical service require proven character?
- What does the New Testament require of those who serve in the church?
- Why does character matter more than mere competence?

Question 4

Student Question:

The seven were chosen because they were known for good character and spiritual maturity (v. 3). If your congregation were looking for people of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom, would your life qualify? What area of character is God calling you to grow in?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the qualifications into a mirror. The seven were not chosen at random; they had earned a reputation for godliness and wisdom over time. Their character was known and proven.

Invite honest self-examination. If the church needed people of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom, would my life commend me? What would those who know me best say about my character, my integrity, my walk with God, my wisdom in handling life?

This is not meant to discourage but to spur growth. Character is cultivated over time through walking with God, obeying His word, and being shaped by His Spirit. Every believer is called to grow toward the kind of proven, Spirit-filled life that can be entrusted with responsibility.

Encourage students to name one area for growth, integrity, self-control, wisdom, reliability, spiritual maturity, and to pursue it intentionally. The goal is not a title or position but to become the kind of person whose life is full of the Spirit and useful to God and the church.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-examination regarding character and reputation
- Character cultivated over time through walking with God
- Every believer called to grow toward proven godliness
- Usefulness to God flowing from Spirit-shaped character

Discussion Prompts

- Would your life qualify by the standard of verse 3?
- What would those who know you best say about your character?
- What area of character is God calling you to grow in?

Question 5

Student Question:

The apostles said they would devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (v. 4). Why did they treat these two things as their highest priority, and what does this teach us about the central place of the word and prayer in the life of the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The apostles drew a clear line: we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. They recognized that nothing must be allowed to crowd out these two priorities, even good and necessary things like serving widows. Prayer and the word were their essential calling.

This reveals what is most central to the church's health. The word of God is the means by which people are born again, taught, corrected, and built up; it is the food of the soul (1 Peter 2:2). Prayer is the church's dependence on God expressed and exercised. Without these, no amount of activity produces spiritual life.

Notice the danger the apostles were guarding against: the tendency for urgent practical demands to crowd out the essential spiritual priorities. There will always be tables to serve, problems to solve, tasks to manage. If leaders and churches are not careful, these can slowly displace the word and prayer.

Help students see the application for the whole church. A congregation stays healthy when it keeps the word central in its preaching, teaching, and worship, and when it is a praying people. When these slip, decline follows, however busy the church may be. The apostles' priorities are still the church's priorities.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Prayer and the ministry of the word as the church's central priorities (v. 4)
- The word as the means of new birth and growth (1 Peter 2:2)
- Prayer as the church's expressed dependence on God
- The danger of urgent tasks crowding out essential priorities

- The health of the church tied to keeping the word and prayer central

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the apostles treat prayer and the word as their highest priority?
- What happens to a church when these priorities slip?
- How can a congregation keep the word and prayer central today?

Question 6

Student Question:

The apostles refused to let even good and urgent tasks crowd out prayer and the word (vv. 2-4). In your own busy life, do urgent demands tend to crowd out time with God? What would it take to give the word and prayer a more central place this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The apostles' struggle is ours in miniature. Our days are full of urgent, legitimate demands, work, family, responsibilities, problems to solve, and these can quietly crowd out the most important things: time in God's word and prayer.

Invite honest reflection. When life gets busy, what is the first thing to be squeezed out? For many of us it is precisely the spiritual disciplines that feed our souls. We intend to pray and read, but the urgent keeps overrunning the essential.

Help students see that the urgent will always be louder than the important. Time with God rarely happens by accident; it must be protected and prioritized, just as the apostles deliberately devoted themselves to it. What we treat as essential, we make time for.

Encourage one concrete change, a set time for Scripture, a daily rhythm of prayer, a guarding of the first minutes of the day, whatever helps give the word and prayer a more central place. We will never find time for God in the leftovers; we must give Him the firstfruits.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The urgent crowding out the essential in the spiritual life
- Time with God as something protected and prioritized
- Spiritual disciplines as the food of the soul
- Giving God the firstfruits rather than the leftovers

Discussion Prompts

- What tends to crowd out your time with God when life gets busy?
- Why does time with God rarely happen by accident?
- What concrete change would give the word and prayer a more central place this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

After the conflict was resolved well, Luke reports that the word of God continued to increase and the disciples multiplied greatly (v. 7). What is the connection between how the church handled this problem and the growth that followed, and what does this teach about guarding the unity of the body?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Luke draws a deliberate connection. The conflict over the widows could have divided the church along ethnic lines, Hellenists against Hebrews, and stalled its witness. Instead, it was handled with humility, fairness, and care, and the immediate result was that the word of God increased and the disciples multiplied greatly.

This teaches that how a church handles conflict and cares for its members directly affects its witness. A divided, quarreling, neglectful church repels people and grieves the Spirit. A united, loving, well-ordered church, where needs are met and conflicts resolved in love, commends the gospel and frees the word to spread.

Notice that even many priests became obedient to the faith. The integrity and love of the community gave weight to its message. Jesus had said the world would know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35), and our unity is part of our witness (John 17:21).

Help students see their stake in this. Guarding the unity of the body, addressing tensions in love, caring for one another, refusing to let resentment fester, is not merely about keeping the peace; it directly serves the spread of the gospel. A healthy body is a fruitful body.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The connection between church health, unity, and gospel growth (v. 7)
- Conflict handled in love as a protection of witness
- The community's love and integrity commending its message (John 13:35)
- Unity as part of the church's witness to the world (John 17:21)
- Guarding unity as service to the spread of the gospel

Discussion Prompts

- What is the connection between resolving the conflict well and the growth that followed?
- How does the way a church handles conflict affect its witness?
- What is your part in guarding the unity of the body?

Question 8

Student Question:

The church's loving, fair handling of a tense situation protected its unity and witness (vv. 1-7). When you sense tension, division, or unmet needs in your church or relationships, do you tend to help heal it or unintentionally add to it? What is one way you could be a peacemaker?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the theme of unity into personal responsibility. Every member either contributes to the unity of the body or to its fractures. Tension, division, and unmet needs are healed or worsened in part by how each of us responds.

Invite honest reflection. When I sense tension, do I help calm and heal it, or do I add fuel, through gossip, taking sides, nursing grievances, or simply withdrawing? Do I notice and help meet needs, or do I leave that to others? Our small choices shape the health of the whole.

Jesus blessed the peacemakers and called them children of God (Matthew 5:9). Peacemaking is active; it pursues reconciliation, refuses to spread division, listens to both sides, and works for the genuine good of all. It is one of the most Christlike things we can do.

Encourage one concrete step toward peace, addressing a tension directly and graciously, refusing to participate in gossip, reaching out to someone who has been overlooked, or working to meet a need that is going unmet. A church becomes the loving community of Acts 6 when its members commit to being peacemakers.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Every member's responsibility for the unity of the body
- Peacemaking as active pursuit of reconciliation (Matthew 5:9)
- The damage of gossip, division, and withdrawal
- Caring for overlooked needs as part of unity

Discussion Prompts

- Do you tend to heal tension or unintentionally add to it?
- What does active peacemaking look like in practice?
- What is one way you could be a peacemaker this week?

Question 9**Student Question:**

Stephen, full of grace and power, spoke with such wisdom and the Spirit that his opponents could not withstand him, so they resorted to false accusations about the temple and the law (vv. 8-15). What does Stephen's witness teach us about Spirit-empowered boldness and the world's opposition to the truth, and why were the charges about the temple and the law so significant?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it sets up the great defense Stephen will give in the next chapter. Stephen is described as full of grace and power, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, doing great wonders and speaking with irresistible wisdom. His opponents could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke, a fulfillment of Jesus' promise that He would give His witnesses a mouth and wisdom that none could contradict (Luke 21:15).

This teaches us about Spirit-empowered witness. Stephen's power was not his own cleverness but the grace and Spirit of God at work in him. When truth is spoken in the power of the Spirit, it carries a weight that mere human argument cannot match. The same Lord who gave Stephen wisdom strengthens His people to bear witness still, though for us that wisdom comes through His completed word rather than new revelation.

It also teaches about the world's opposition to truth. Unable to defeat Stephen by argument, his enemies turned to lies, secretly instigating false witnesses. This is the recurring pattern: when the truth cannot be answered, it is attacked by other means, slander, false accusation, and force. Faithful witnesses must expect this, as Jesus warned (John 15:18-20). Notice too the dignity God gave His servant: even as the lies flew, Stephen's face shone like the face of an angel.

The specific charges are deeply significant. They accused Stephen of speaking against this holy place (the temple) and the law of Moses, claiming Jesus would destroy the temple and change the customs Moses delivered. There was a distortion in these charges, but also a kernel that pointed to a profound truth. In Christ, the temple and the law were indeed reaching their fulfillment. Jesus is the true temple, the meeting place of God and man (John 2:19-21); the sacrificial system found its fulfillment in His one perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1-14); and the law of Moses, having served its purpose, was fulfilled in Christ and gives way to the New Covenant (Matthew 5:17; Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 8:13). Stephen was beginning to proclaim that God's purposes had moved forward in Christ, and this threatened those whose identity was bound to the old order.

Help students grasp the weight of this transition, which Stephen will unfold fully in Acts 7. The Old Covenant was holy and God-given, but it was always pointing forward to Christ. To cling to the temple and the law while rejecting the One they foreshadowed is to miss their whole purpose. This is the heart of the conflict, and it will cost Stephen his life. Faithful witness sometimes means proclaiming truths that overturn cherished assumptions, and bearing the cost with a face shining like an angel's.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Spirit-empowered witness that opponents cannot withstand (Luke 21:15)
- The world's opposition turning to slander when truth cannot be answered (John 15:18-20)
- God's dignity upon His faithful witnesses (the shining face)

- Jesus as the true temple, the meeting place of God and man (John 2:19-21)
- The fulfillment of the sacrificial system in Christ's one sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1-14)
- The law of Moses fulfilled in Christ, giving way to the New Covenant (Matthew 5:17; Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 8:13)
- Faithful witness bearing the cost of proclaiming truth

Discussion Prompts

- What was the source of Stephen's irresistible wisdom and power?
- Why did his opponents resort to false accusations rather than argument?
- Why were the charges about the temple and the law so significant in light of Christ?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over this whole passage, the wise handling of conflict, the call to humble service and good character, the priority of the word, and Stephen's courageous witness, name one specific way the Lord is calling you to grow, and what is one step you will take this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone draws the lesson to a personal response. Acts 6 offers many invitations: to serve humbly, to grow in character, to keep the word and prayer central, to guard the unity of the body, and to bear witness courageously even at cost.

Invite each person to name one concrete step. Perhaps it is to take up some humble service, to grow in an area of character, to give the word and prayer a more central place, to be a peacemaker, or to speak the truth with Spirit-given courage.

Keep the focus on transformation. The aim is not merely to admire the early church and Stephen but to become servants of good character, full of the Spirit, useful to God, and faithful under pressure.

Close by reminding students that the same God who filled Stephen with grace and power and made the seven useful to the church is at work in them, ready to shape them into faithful servants and courageous witnesses in their own day.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal response to the call to service, character, and witness
- Becoming useful to God through Spirit-shaped character
- Keeping the word and prayer central
- Faithful courage under pressure

Discussion Prompts

- What most challenged or stirred you in this passage?
- What specific step toward growth will you take this week?
- How can this group encourage one another in it?