

The Church in the New Testament

(Sunday AM — Church Campus)

Week 3: Service and Leadership

Acts 6:1–7

Growth brings both blessings and challenges. As the early church in Jerusalem grew rapidly, a problem arose that threatened its unity: Hellenistic Jewish widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The complaint was legitimate, and the apostles took it seriously.

What is remarkable about this passage is how the apostles handled the problem. They did not ignore it, minimize it, or attempt to do everything themselves. Instead, they recognized that different needs require different servants. The apostles would devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word, while qualified men would be selected to oversee the practical service of caring for the needy.

The congregation was instructed to choose seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom. These men were not afterthoughts or second-class servants. They were essential to the health and mission of the church. The result of this wise division of labor was immediate: the word of God continued to increase, the number of disciples multiplied, and the church remained unified. This passage teaches that the church functions best when every member serves according to their ability and when leadership is shared wisely under God's direction.

Group Discussion: Why was it important that the apostles did not try to handle every need themselves? What does this teach about the relationship between leadership and delegation in the church?

Personal Reflection: How are you currently serving in the body of Christ? If you are not actively involved in service, what steps could you take to begin using your abilities for the good of the congregation?

Read Acts 6:1–7

Study Questions

1. In verse 1, a complaint arises because the Hellenistic widows were being neglected. What does this tell us about the kinds of problems that can arise even in a growing, faithful church?
2. Why was this particular problem—neglecting the care of widows—so serious that it required immediate attention from the apostles?

3. In verse 2, the apostles say it is “not right” for them to “give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.” Does this mean practical service is less important than preaching? What is the apostles’ point?
4. The apostles instruct the congregation to choose the seven men (v. 3). What does this tell us about the role of the congregation in selecting those who serve?
5. What qualifications did the apostles require for these men: “good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (v. 3)? Why were these qualities necessary even for practical service?
6. In verse 4, the apostles say they will devote themselves to “prayer and the ministry of the word.” What does this teach about the priorities of spiritual leadership?
7. Verse 5 names the seven men chosen, including Stephen and Philip. What do we learn later about these men, and what does their example teach about the connection between service and spiritual growth?
8. Verse 6 describes the apostles praying and laying hands on the seven. What is the significance of this public act of appointment?
9. According to verse 7, the result of this decision was that “the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly.” How does wise organization and shared service contribute to the growth of the church?
10. Looking at Acts 6:1–7 as a whole, what principles of service, leadership, and problem-solving does this passage establish for the church today?