

# Acts 6



## Needs and Leaders Arising

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

### Read Aloud Acts 6:1-7

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own words. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

### Acts 6:1-4

1

Despite persecution, the early church grew rapidly through the preaching of the Gospel. Interestingly, Acts describes the Christians not just as “believers” but rather as disciples. A disciple is simply someone who learns from and follows a teacher. The early church was full of disciples, those who actively followed and learned from Jesus Christ through His Word and were led by His Spirit.

A

While the church rapidly grew, complaints and problems arose. It was not right for the Apostles who were called to preach and spiritually lead the church to stop their work to handle the practical needs that arose. However, the needs were still important on a spiritual level and needed to be taken care of. One of these needs was supporting widows who could not provide for themselves.

B

The “Hellenists” were Greek-speaking Jews from the dispersion of the Israelite people. These Jews adopted Greek culture and did not speak Hebrew or Aramaic. As a result of their culture and language, they were often seen as “second class” or “less spiritual” compared to the Jews of the homeland. Many of the Hellenistic Jews had most likely traveled to Jerusalem during Pentecost but stayed in Jerusalem after being saved.

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Hellenistic Jews felt that they were being mistreated. Perhaps even feeling as if this was due to racism within the church. The Gospel puts a major emphasis on uniting people groups that are typically divided due to ethnic, economic, and cultural barriers. The Apostles demonstrate the heart of the Gospel in that they take the complaint seriously. They addressed the disenfranchised group and served those who were weak (the widows).

Not only is unity important to God, but caring for orphans and widows is near to God’s heart and a priority of His mission. James 1:26-27, Zechariah 7:9-10

Q

**Question: How can you be a catalyst for taking care of orphans and widows at MBC? How can you help bring unity in the midst of a divided culture, both in the church and outside of the church?**

2 As the Apostles assessed this situation, they recognized three things.

A First, that the need at hand was important and valuable to God.

B Second, they could not set aside their calling and gifting in order to take care of this pressing need. There are always needs, and there are always fires to put out, but the apostles were committed to their calling from God.

C Finally, they recognized that although it was not their gift, they could help delegate this task to other qualified leaders.

! Notice that the Apostles did not simply find willing bodies to accomplish this work; rather, the Apostles appointed qualified individuals. This is very important! Every task done in the church and for God's glory is spiritual. Therefore, serving well requires spiritual maturity. Below were the qualifications.

**Men** - The church appointed men to oversee and lead this venture.

**Full of the Spirit** - These individuals needed to display the fruit of the Spirit.

**Good Reputation** - These individuals needed to be known as faithful and godly followers of Jesus.

**Full of Wisdom** - These individuals needed to possess godly wisdom and problem solving skills that were grounded in the Scriptures.

D Finally, the Apostles not only delegated this responsibility, but they, in turn were focused and driven to accomplish their own calling. Read Ephesians 4:11-16 as it is a great picture of how the body of Christ works together, and regardless of our role, it requires the work of the Spirit. Ephesians 4:11-16

? **Question: As you read Ephesians 4:11-16 what comes to mind for you? What part of the body are you? What are your callings and giftings?**

### Acts 6:5-7

1 The Apostles stayed true to their calling of the ministry of the Word and prayer. With the help of the congregation, they executed a plan to establish godly leaders. The role appointed in Acts 6 is what came to be known later in the church as "deacons." Deacons in the early church helped serve behind the scenes. They helped lead and execute ministries like benevolence, finances, administration, and organization of the church. They were assistance to the overseers/shepherds. However, many deacons also possessed powerful ministry gifts.

! It is interesting to note that this is the first time that "laying on of hands" is used in the affirmation and appointment of leaders within the church. This emphasizes the importance of church structure, leadership, and the seriousness of appointing new leaders. Acts 13:3, 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:6

2 As the seven were appointed, the congregation was encouraged, the apostles stayed the course, and the church added new believers.

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### Read Aloud Acts 6:8-15

Describe what is happening in your own words.

### Acts 6:8

Stephen was one of the seven men appointed to take care of the practical needs of the church. Notice that this did not mean Stephen was fearful and incapable in regard to spiritual work and the advancement of the Gospel. Instead Stephen was a powerful evangelist full of grace and power. Stephen was able to serve God in this way due to the grace of God working through faith. This is available to all believers (Ephesians 5:18). Hebrews 11:32-40

? **Question: Do you find yourself doubting the power of faith or what you can accomplish for the glory of God? If so, why? If not, what has helped you overcome?**

## Acts 6:9-15

**1** As Stephen stepped out into faith he was quickly in an intense spiritual battle. Stephen was not just confronted by a few angry people, but he was confronted by those much more educated than him. They were also much more numerous than him, as multiple synagogue leaders rose up to resist him.

Freedman - Descendants of Jewish slaves captured by Pompey in 63 BC.

Cyrenians & Alexandrians - Jews in relation to the two great cities of North Africa.

Cilicia & Asia - Jews in relation to the providences of Asian Minor occupied by Roman rule.

**2** In the midst of this confrontation, the wisdom and grace of Stephen prevailed. The power and the wisdom of the Gospel left the opposition dumbfounded.

Titus 2:7, 1 Peter 3:15, James 3:15-18, Proverbs 2:6



**Question: From the above Scripture, what themes surround wisdom? Where does it come from?**

**3**

Despite Stephen answering in wisdom, grace, faith, and power, the crowd still resisted him and spoke falsely about him. This was true of Jesus as well. He was perfect, yet He was constantly falsely accused. This will be true of us as well as we seek to follow Christ. However, it is important to evaluate whether we are being attacked due to godliness or sinfulness. 1 Peter 2:19-25, Matthew 10:16-25

As Stephen withstood the persecution, God defended him, making his face like that of an angel. Like those who crucified Christ, the religious leaders hated Stephen despite his wisdom and the miraculous power that he bore witness to. Our job is not to control people's responses but to simply obey God. Even if you look like an angel, speak the wisdom of God, and even were to rise from the dead, those of the world will not listen unless their heart is changed by God's grace working through faith.

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## Weekly Challenge

It can be tempting to be led by people pleasing and the most urgent "need" rather than by the calling of God. In this Scripture we saw the necessity and the power of the Body of Christ working together according to their roles and gifts. We want to be a people who are eager and willing to serve. We also want to be a people who are discerning and can establish boundaries when needed in order to follow the calling of the Lord. Take some time this week to journal and contemplate your calling. What does God have for you in this season of life? This may be a general calling, or there may be something specific that God has placed on your heart.

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## Memory Verse

### Acts 9:31 ESV

*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.*