

**Acts 6:1-15 - “Seven Chosen to Serve”
November 8, 2020 - Outline and Scripture**

Outline

- 1. Greet one another, begin with prayer, and read Acts 6:1-15.**
- 2. Review chapter 5 of Acts very briefly.**
- 3. Discuss the problem developing in Acts 6:1-2.**
 - Cultural and ethnic divisions rear their head around legitimate need
 - Widows in the 1st century often find themselves in great need due to a lack of organized support; food distribution has been developed to meet this need
 - But the claim that Greek-speaking widows are slighted in favor of Aramaic speaking widows reveals a heretofore hidden bone of contention
 - Cultural and ethnic differences have been around as long as recorded history. Why do these differences raise such concerns?
 - How do Christian love, grace, and community transcend these barriers?
- 4. Discuss the solution offered by the apostles in Acts 6:3-7.**
 - The apostles lead in noting their specific call and proposing a plan
 - The 7 men chosen are all Greek-speaking (at least based on their names)
 - Their ministry set apart by the apostles; today considered the first deacons
 - Focus on what we might call “caregiving” and providing physical support
 - 2 to take prominent roles overall: Stephen and Philip
 - When have you received care from a fellow Christian? What form did this care take? How did it help you in your time of need?
 - The apostles state their focus is on prayer and the ministry of the word. What does this mean? How would you describe this focus in today’s context?
 - Verse 7 gives a glowing report in light of the changes made in verses 1-6. Talk about the relationship between the changes and the favorable results.
- 5. Discuss the leadership of Stephen and his arrest in Acts 6:8-15.**
 - Stephen’s gifts become apparent to all, even his enemies
 - Determined to eliminate Stephen once and for all
 - False charges lead to a trial of the entire Christian message, claiming “we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God”
 - Stephen’s face glows with the glory of God (see Moses, Exodus 34)
 - Stephen seems especially blessed with gifts of faith, service, and wisdom. When have you personally encountered a person with tremendous spiritual gifts? How did you recognize this person’s giftedness?
- 6. Close in prayer.**

Scripture (New International Version)

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews^[a] among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. **2** 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.

3 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 **4** and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

5 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. **6** They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. **7** 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.

8 Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. **9** Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. **10** But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.” **12** So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. **13** They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. **14** For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.” **15** All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Footnotes

Acts 6:1 That is, Jews who had adopted the Greek language and culture.