



WARM-UP

(We recommend you choose 1 or 2 of the following questions.)

Share a high and a low from the past week.

What chores around the apartment do you enjoy the least? Enjoy the most?

Have you ever worked as a waiter? Did you enjoy the work? If you haven't worked as a waiter, do you think you would enjoy the work? Why or why not?

WORD

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 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. 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 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." 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. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 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 6:1-7 (NIV)



INTRODUCTION

As the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied in number, it is not surprising to read of problems increasing as well. This chapter describes problems from within and without the congregation.

Hellenists (Jewish Christians who adopted Grecian culture) complained that the Hebrews (Jewish Christians who sought to preserve Jewish culture) neglected their widows in the daily distribution (cf. Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35). The apostles, desiring not to be distracted from their own work, summoned the disciples and charged them to select seven men whom the apostles might appoint to take care of this responsibility. Seven are selected by the people and appointed by the apostles through prayer and the laying on of hands. With the problem solved, the word of God spread and the number of disciples multiplied greatly, including the obedience of many priests (1-7).

Stephen, one of the seven, began doing many wonders and signs. Opposition arose from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen who disputed with Stephen. Unable to resist the Spirit and the wisdom of which he spoke, they resorted to false witnesses to stir up the people, elders, and scribes. Brought before the council, Stephen was charged with blasphemy against the temple and the law of Moses. The chapter ends with the council looking at Stephen, seeing his face as the face of an angel (8-15).

DISCUSSION

1. What was the complaint raised in this passage? Who was the complaint against and who raised it? (v.1)
2. Read Acts 2:42-45 and Acts 4:32. How could the Greek widows have been neglected, considering the generosity and care reported in those two passages?
3. What did the apostles prioritize over serving food to the Greek widows? What might this tell us about the early church and its leaders? (v.2)



DISCUSSION CONTINUED...

4. Why do you think they chose men 'full of the Spirit and wisdom' to serve the Greek widows? What kind of credentials does your church require in order to serve (v.3).
5. The names of the 7 men chosen were all Greek names meaning they were likely all Greek men. Why do you think the apostles chose all Greek men for this task? (v.5)
6. What might be the connection between caring for the Greek widows and the number of disciples increasing rapidly, including the conversion of a large number of priests? (v.6)

APPLICATION

1. Who might God be calling you to serve? How can you serve them this week?
2. What can you do to be more 'full of the Spirit and wisdom'?
3. Is there somewhere in the church that you as a group can pitch in and help?

PRAYER

1. Ask God to show you who in the church might be being neglected and pray for them.
2. Ask God to help the church grow like it did here in Acts 6:7.
3. Ask God to help you walk full of the Spirit and wisdom in everything you do.