

The Acts of the Apostles - Acts 6:1–15

Week 9 - Teaching Summary

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Introduction

Acts 6 marks a pivotal moment in the history of the Early Church. While the Church had already faced persecution from external sources, it now faced challenges from within. Following the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, division and social discrimination began to threaten the unity of the Jerusalem Church. As the number of disciples rapidly increased, the apostles were required to address practical needs while preserving the spiritual health of the community.

This chapter also introduces Stephen, a Spirit-filled servant who would become the first Christian martyr. His ministry, wisdom, power, and unwavering faith serve as a model for believers today. Acts 6 demonstrates how godly leadership, community responsibility, and Spirit-filled ministry can overcome division and advance the Kingdom of God even in the face of opposition.

I. The Threat of Division Within the Church (Acts 6:1)

As the Church continued to grow, a complaint arose between the Hellenistic Jews (Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora) and the Hebraic Jews (native Judean Jews). The widows of the Hellenistic believers were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

Key Insights

- Growth creates opportunities for both blessing and challenges.
- Social and cultural differences can become sources of division if not addressed.
- The Church is called to reflect God's love and honor toward all people.

Word Study

Disciple – Greek: *mathētēs* (μαθητής)

Meaning:

- Learner
- Student
- Apprentice

- One committed to following and learning

Being a disciple is more than identifying as a Christian; it is committing to a lifelong journey of learning and following Jesus.

Application

The Church must guard against favoritism and discrimination, remembering that all believers are equal members of God's family.

II. The Wisdom of Shared Leadership (Acts 6:2–6)

The apostles responded to the problem by gathering the entire community and involving them in the solution. Rather than personally overseeing the daily distribution, they instructed the believers to select seven qualified men to serve.

Qualifications for Leadership

The seven men were to be:

Full of the Spirit

Spirit-filled leaders demonstrate:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Wisdom

Cross Reference: Galatians 5:22–25

Full of Wisdom

Wisdom is the practical application of God's knowledge and guidance.

Cross References:

- Proverbs 2:6
- Proverbs 8:14
- 1 Corinthians 12:8

The Priority of Apostolic Leadership

The apostles devoted themselves to:

1. Prayer
2. The ministry of the Word

They understood that spiritual leadership must flow from intimacy with God.

Key Principle

Healthy churches empower others to serve while leaders remain devoted to prayer, Scripture, and spiritual oversight.

III. The Appointment of the Seven (Acts 6:5–6)

The entire congregation agreed upon the solution and selected seven Spirit-filled men.

These men included:

- Stephen
- Philip
- Procorus
- Nicanor
- Timon
- Parmenas
- Nicolas

The apostles laid hands on them, publicly recognizing and commissioning them for ministry.

The Laying on of Hands

Throughout Scripture, the laying on of hands signifies:

- Blessing
- Commissioning
- Ordination
- Impartation of spiritual gifts

Application

Ministry is most effective when leaders are recognized, empowered, and released by the community.

IV. Growth Through Proper Order (Acts 6:7)

As the leadership challenge was resolved, the Church continued to grow rapidly.

Results

- The Word of God spread.
- The number of disciples increased.
- Many Jewish priests became obedient to the faith.

Key Insight

When practical needs and spiritual priorities are properly aligned, the Church flourishes.

Cross Reference

2 Corinthians 2:4–5

Paul reminds us that faith ultimately rests upon the power of God rather than human wisdom.

V. Stephen: A Model Spirit-Filled Believer (Acts 6:8–10)

Stephen emerges as one of the most significant figures in the Early Church.

Characteristics of Stephen

- Full of faith
- Full of grace
- Full of power
- Worker of signs and wonders
- Effective teacher of truth

Stephen demonstrates that supernatural ministry is not reserved for apostles alone but is available to every believer who yields to the Holy Spirit.

Cross Reference

1 Corinthians 12:7

The gifts of the Spirit are given for the common good and the advancement of God's Kingdom.

Key Principle

God desires to work powerfully through ordinary believers who are surrendered to Him.

VI. Opposition from the Spirit of Religion (Acts 6:9–14)

Stephen's ministry provoked opposition from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen.

Unable to refute his wisdom and Spirit-empowered teaching, they resorted to false accusations.

Their Strategy

- Distort the truth
- Spread lies
- Stir up public outrage
- Accuse Stephen of blasphemy

Stephen was charged with offenses similar to those brought against Jesus.

Key Insight

When truth cannot be defeated intellectually, opponents often attempt to undermine it through false accusations.

Cross References

- John 8:44
- Deuteronomy 19:15
- Matthew 5:17
- Luke 24:45–49

The Real Issue

Stephen was proclaiming that Jesus fulfilled the Law, the Temple system, and the promises of the Old Covenant. This message challenged the religious structures that many leaders refused to surrender.

VII. Stephen's Heavenly Countenance (Acts 6:15)

As Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin, those present observed that his face appeared like that of an angel.

Significance

- Stephen was manifesting the presence of God.
- His countenance reflected divine peace and confidence.

- He remained faithful despite the threat of death.

Cross Reference

Revelation 12:11

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they did not love their lives unto death."

Key Principle

Those who spend time in God's presence often reflect His character, peace, and glory even in seasons of suffering.

Major Themes of Acts 6:1–15

1. Growth Requires Organization

As the Church grows, wise structures and servant leadership become essential.

2. Unity Must Be Protected

Division often begins through neglect, favoritism, or unresolved conflict.

3. Spirit-Filled Leadership Matters

Leaders should be recognized for their character, wisdom, and relationship with God.

4. Every Believer Can Be Used by God

Stephen demonstrates that powerful ministry is not limited to church offices.

5. Truth Often Faces Opposition

The gospel challenges human pride and religious systems.

6. God's Presence Sustains His People

Stephen's courage flowed from his intimate relationship with God.

Discussion Questions

1. The apostles involved the entire community in solving the conflict between the Hellenistic and Hebraic believers. What can today's Church learn from this model of shared responsibility and servant leadership?
2. Stephen was not one of the apostles, yet he operated in great wisdom, power, and spiritual authority. How does his example challenge our understanding of who God can use in ministry?

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- 3.** When Stephen faced false accusations and intense opposition, he remained faithful and reflected God's presence. How can believers maintain spiritual courage and Christlike character when facing criticism, injustice, or persecution?