



• Lesson 8 (Acts 6:1-7) •
**“Pick Out From Among
 You Seven Men”**

Even though we’re covering just seven verses in this lesson, they are an important part of Luke’s record of early church history. Put a group of people together, *keep* them together for very long and a disagreement, oversight, or problem of some sort will inevitably arise. Whether they lived in the first century or they live in the twenty-first century, people are people, and with people come conflicts. Luke documents a complaint that arose in those early days which could have grown to threaten the unity of the Lord’s church during a time of explosive growth. We’ll focus in this lesson on how the apostles handled the conflict and seek to make some practical connections for our own time and culture. Regardless of the time or setting, if our attitudes are Christ-like, problems *can* be resolved and harmony *can* thrive.

A Serious Complaint Arises

Luke begins this section of his historical narrative with a brief reference to context. “Now in these days...” (Acts 6:1). Remember a few of the details he has already provided about “these days.”

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32, 34-35)

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, [the apostles] did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. (Acts 5:42)

⇒ The “disciples” were continuing to increase in number, according to Acts 6:1. This is Luke’s first use of that word in Acts. What is a **disciple** and what are we implying as we describe ourselves as “disciples of Christ”?



“Hellenists” were Greek-speaking Jews. Descendants of Abraham who were born and raised in Judea or Galilee typically spoke Hebrew or Aramaic, a language that had many similarities to Hebrew. For centuries before the time of Jesus, Aramaic was the prevailing language of that relatively small region.

But not all Jews lived in Judea or Galilee. A great many descendants of Abraham were born and raised in North Africa, Asia Minor, Achaia, Macedonia, and beyond. Quite naturally, they would have spoken Greek. Many of them were zealous about their Jewish history, regularly meeting in synagogues, and interacting with the temple system in Jerusalem, but doing so in Greek—the dominant language of the first century world.

We are told in other places how Samaritans and foreigners were regarded by many within the Hebrew community.

For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. (John 4:9)

The Jews answered [Jesus], “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (John 8:48)

Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And [Jesus] said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” (Mark 7:26-27)

With that context in mind, it’s not hard to imagine some Hebrews being prejudiced against those who had grown up in Grecian culture, treating them as “less than pure” because of their Hellenized ideals and customs.

⇒ Even though sinners are added as sons and daughters to the one family of God upon obedience to the gospel (Rom 6:1-4; 8:11-17; 2 Cor 6:14-18; Gal 3:23-29), physical differences, diverse cultural backgrounds, varying preferences and opinions remain as a fact of everyday life. How do these things sometimes lead to tension, disagreements, oversights, and the showing of partiality among brethren, even in the twenty-first century?



“The daily distribution” - it is evident from Acts 4:32-5:11 that the apostles had instituted a system of relief for needy saints. Much needed attention will be paid to the care of widows in later New Testament epistles (1 Tim 5:3-16; James 1:27).

It is also clear that the number of disciples was growing dramatically (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14). Something had to give.

⇒ Considering typical human nature, what might you have been tempted to do if you were one of the Hellenists whose widows were being neglected?

⇒ And what if you were one of the Hebrews? With so many to care for, it would have been very easy to unintentionally overlook someone, especially if they were different from you. What if you were working as hard and sincerely as you could, yet still there were those who were complaining? What might you have been tempted to do?

⇒ Interestingly, the apostles did not undertake a blame-finding investigation, nor did they propose that Hellenist believers and Hebrew believers go their separate ways. Instead, they “summoned the full number of the disciples” (6:2) and immediately sought a solution to the problem. Is there anything we can learn from that?

“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.” (Acts 6:2)

“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4)

It’s hard to imagine the workload of the apostles in these early days of the church. They were responsible for teaching and ministering to thousands of people. On top of all that, problems must have often arisen that would require a great deal of time, attention, and wisdom.

⇒ Why does it seem so very easy to allow our devotion to prayer and the word of God to slip in times of great busyness?

⇒ Why were the apostles determined to avoid that pitfall?

⇒ With busy schedules and wide-ranging responsibilities of our own, what do we need to learn from the apostles?



In Acts 6:2, the verb translated “serve” is *diakoneō* from which we derive *diakonos*, translated into English as “deacon.” The verb form of that word is frequently used to describe the act of serving. Mark 10:45 is a great example—“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to **serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Years later, Paul will reference “deacons” in Philippians 1:1 and describe what deacons “must be” in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. What does all of this tell us about the contribution deacons make to the health and growth of a local body of believers?

⇒ The apostles instructed the disciples to pick out from among themselves seven men with specific qualities. What do these qualities mean and why do they matter?

◆ Men of good repute -

◆ Full of the Spirit -

◆ Full of wisdom -

⇒ **THOUGHT QUESTION:** “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). What is the significance of that last phrase?

A-C-T-S made personal

Based on my study of Acts 6:1-7:

A - doration: God is worthy of my **praise** because...

C - aution: this section of Scripture reminded me to **evaluate**...

T - rust: my **faith** in my Savior has grown because...

S - trength: I was particularly **helped** and **encouraged** by...

