

1) Setting (Acts 6:1a)

Time

Location

Character

¹ In those days, as the disciples [τῶν μαθητῶν] were increasing in number,

In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number

the disciples

2) Conflict (Acts 6:1b)

Time

Location

Character

there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews [τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν] against the Hebraic Jews [τοὺς Ἑβραίους] that their widows were being overlooked [ἸΠΙ] in the daily distribution [διακονία].

the daily distribution

the Hellenistic Jews, the Hebraic Jews, their widows

3) Climax (Acts 6:2-4)

Time

Location

Character

² The Twelve [οἱ δώδεκα] summoned the whole company of the disciples [τῶν μαθητῶν] and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching [διακονέω] the word of God [τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ] to wait [διακονέω] on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, select [ΑΜΜ] [ἐπισκέψασθε] from among you seven men [ἄνῃρ] of good reputation [μαρτυρέω], full of the Spirit [πλήρεις πνεύματος] and wisdom [σοφία], whom we can appoint [καταστήσομεν] to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote [προσκαρτερήσομεν] ourselves to prayer [τῇ προσευχῇ] and to the ministry of the word [τῇ διακονία τοῦ λόγου]."

The Twelve, the whole company of the disciples, seven men

4) Resolution (Acts 6:5-6)

Time

Location

Character

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose [ἐξελέξαντο] Stephen, a man full of faith [ἄνδρα πλήρης πίστεως] and the Holy Spirit [πνεύματος ἁγίου], and Philip, [and] Prochorus, [and] Nicanor, [and] Timon, [and] Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch. ⁶ They had them stand before the apostles [τῶν ἀποστόλων], who prayed [προσευξάμενοι] and laid their hands on them.

the whole company, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolaus, the apostles,

5) New setting (Acts 6:7)

Time

Location

Character

⁷ So the word of God [ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ] spread [ΙΑΙ], the disciples [τῶν μαθητῶν] in Jerusalem increased [ἸΠΙ] greatly in number, and a large group of priests [τῶν ἱερέων] became obedient [ΙΑΙ, ὑπήκουον] to the faith [τῇ πίστει].

Jerusalem

the disciples, a large group of priests

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Acts 6:1-7

1. How has the author organised this passage? a) An outline, b) Tools, c) The emphasis.

- a) 1) At the time the disciples were multiplying (Acts 6:1a).
 - 2) The Hellenistic Jews were tense with the Hebraic Jews because of the distribution of food to their widows (Acts 6:1b).
 - 3) So the apostles charged the disciples to select men they could appoint to serve the tables, while they served in prayer and the word (Acts 6:2-4).
 - 4) The disciples chose seven men, who were appointed by the apostles (Acts 6:5-6)
 - 5) As a result the word of God spread, the disciples multiplied, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7)
- b) I identified narrative and paid attention to the shift in character focus (all the disciples, the widows, the apostles, the men, the priests). Repetitions (the disciples [τῶν μαθητῶν], distribution/ministry [διακονία], word of God [τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ/ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ], full of [πλήρης/πλήρεις], seven men [ἑπτὰ ἄνδρας], prayer [προσευχή/προσεύχομαι], increase in number [αὐξάνω/πληθύνω]). (Hellenistic Jews [τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν], Hebraic Jews [τοὺς Ἑβραίους], the Twelve [οἱ δώδεκα], good reputation [μαρτυρούμενοι], Spirit and wisdom [πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας], obedient to the faith [ὑπήκοον τῇ πίστει], select [ἐπισκέψασθε], appoint [καταστήσομεν], chose [ἔξελέξαντο]). Key verses (Acts 6:3-4, Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
- c) When ethnic tension threatened church unity, the apostles prioritised the Word, and Spirit-enabled men served in appointed roles, resulting in the gospel's unstoppable advance.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.

- a) 1) In Acts 5:17-42, the apostles are jailed, tried, and released, after which they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. In Acts 6:1a, the result is, the disciples were increasing in number.
 - 2) In Acts 6:8-7:60, Stephen is accused of blasphemy, and is martyred, resulting in the persecution of the church, and those who were scattered going on their way preaching the word. In Acts 6:5, Stephen is described as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, his service helping to resolve an internal tension, resulting in the disciples multiplying.
- b) 1) Hellenistic Jews would have spoken Greek, and been from the diaspora. Hebraic Jews would have spoken Aramaic, and been from Jerusalem.
- 2) Hellenistic Jews would have been unable to support themselves. Hebraic Jews would have had financial ways to support themselves.
- 3) The apostles had authority over the local church on matters of doctrine and practice.
- c) 1) Widows without families to take care of them would have been dependant on charity from their community for support.
- 2.) The seven's names are all Greek, and therefore were likely selected from the Hellenistic community.
- d) There are no direct citations of the Old Testament in Acts 6:1-7. However there might be an allusion to Exodus 18, Numbers 11, and Deuteronomy 1:9-18. In Exodus 18, Moses delegates judicial responsibilities to capable leaders appointed from among the people, allowing him to focus on representing them before God. Like Jethro's counsel to Moses, the apostles delegate practical ministry to Spirit-filled men to preserve their primary calling to prayer and preaching. In Numbers 11, God distributes Moses' Spirit to 70 elders to share the burden of leading Israel, enabling continued mission. Just as the 70 elders were Spirit-empowered to assist Moses, the Seven receive apostolic commissioning to sustain the church's growth and unity. In Deuteronomy 1:9-18, Moses appoints wise and respected leaders to judge Israel's cases, reserving only the most difficult matters for himself. Similar to Moses' delegation for effective governance, the apostles establish Spirit-qualified servants to handle practical needs while safeguarding their teaching ministry.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

The Gospel triumphs when church leaders minister God's Word, and church members minister to God's people in the Spirit's power.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Himself tied service to the gospel when He said, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). His death and resurrection are His ultimate acts of service to the people He ransomed. Now, those that have believed this message, and put their faith and trust in Him, go on to serve one another (Galatians 5:13) as an ongoing effect of the work of the Spirit within them. Church leaders demonstrate the gospel within them by ministering the Word (Acts 6:4). And church members demonstrate the gospel within them by meeting the practical ministry needs of one another (Acts 6:2-3).

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

Christ's ransomed Church, ministering in His Spirit's power, sees His Gospel triumph.

6. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

- a) To see the gospel triumph in our city, through our church, we must minister to one another in the Spirit's power.
- b) To experience the transformative power of the gospel you must first become obedient to the faith.

7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

b) Three Marks of a Spirit-powered church:

- a) 1) discipling for growth (Acts 6:1a, 7)
- 2) Uniting for purpose (Acts 6:1b, 5-6)
- 3) Empowering for service (Acts 6:2-4)

Opening prayer

Introduction

- I can't cook. I can't grill a fish. I can't roast a chicken. I can't boil an egg. I can't even bake toast. **But** I do know how to make a killer snackwich. I can open the fridge, and combine whatever's in there into a mouthwatering morsel. Never mind what time of the month it is.
- I'm a simple guy. My go to snackwich is the classic. Cheese and tomato. 🖐️ A slice of bread. A layer of cheese. A thick slice of tomato. And here's the secret, another layer of cheese. And I don't want to get too technical here. **But** it's best if the top layer is sharp cheddar and the bottom layer extra aged gouda. And a slice of bread. 🖐️ And then it goes into the snackwicher. I know there's too much jammed in there. So while it's snackwicing you scoop and eat the cheese oozing out the sides. Trying not to burn your fingers or tongue in the process. I call it my cheesy supreme.
- **Acts 6:1-7** is a little like my cheesy supreme. **It's layered.** Consider the slices of bread on either end. 🖐️ The top and bottom of Acts **6:1-7**. The first part of **verse 1a** and **verse 7**.

¹ In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number... ..⁷ So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

- Can you see **Acts 6:1-7** is about the multiplication of disciples? 🖐️ The disciples at the beginning of the story is **increasing** in number. And while there is stuff in the middle, by the time you get to the end, the number of the disciples is **growing** again. 🖐️ **Multiplying.** **Acts 6:1-7** is about the multiplication of disciples.
- 🖐️ **What comes after the bread in my cheesy supreme?** The layers of cheese. The second part of **verse 1b** and **verses 5-6**.

...there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution... ..⁵ This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch. ⁶ They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

- Can you see **Acts 6:1-7** is about church unity? 🖐️ **Disunity** at the beginning. A spat between the Hellenistic Jews and the Hebraic Jews. A problem. **Unity** at the end. 🖐️ The whole gathering pleased. A solution. **Acts 6:1-7** is about **church unity**.
- 🖐️ **What's in the middle of my cheesy supreme?** A thick slice of tomato. Seasoned to taste. The Middle of our story, **verses 2-4**.

² The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would

not be right for us to give up *preaching* the word of God to wait on tables.³
Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty.⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

- Can you see Acts 6:1-7 is about service? Some of God's people are set aside for spiritual acts service. Some of God's people are set aside for practical acts service. 🙌 At it's heart Acts 6:1-7 is about service.
- Acts 6:1-7 is like my cheesy supreme. 🙌 Slices of bread. 🙌 Layers of cheese. 🙌 And a thick slice of tomato.

Arrangement

Three Marks of a Spirit-powered church:

1. 🙌 Discipling for growth (Acts 6:1a, 7) on the edges.
2. 🙌 Uniting for purpose (Acts 6:1b, 5-6)
3. 🙌 Empowering for service (Acts 6:2-4) in the middle.

Argument

- Christ's ransomed Church, ministering in His Spirit's power, sees His Gospel triumph.

1) Discipling for growth (Acts 6:1a, 7)

¹ In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number, ⁷ So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

- This passage begins and ends with the disciples increasing in number. How were people added to their number? People were added to their number as they became obedient to the faith. Becoming obedient to the faith means to surrender to Christ as Lord. Not just intellectual agreement, but a life transformed by the Gospel. Saving faith is a call to obedience. And saving faith produces obedience. And saving faith is evidenced by obedience.
- The disciples increased in number. The church grew. I've been meaning to chat to you about church growth for a while. When I hear the phrase church growth I cringe, and I imagine you do too. Because we hear of so much abuse in the church for the sake of growth. Churches fixated on numbers. And for the sake of numbers going to inappropriate lengths to fuel growth.
- The latter part of the 20th century saw the rise of the seeker-sensitive movement. Influenced by church growth gurus such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. Seeker-sensitive churches strive to be as modern, relevant, and attractational as possible. The goal is to reach unbelievers. But all too often seeker-sensitive churches devolve into a seeker-driven churches. Churches devoted to packing in the masses and keeping them entertained at any cost.
- Luke doesn't care about numbers for numbers sake. But Luke does care about how many ransomed lives have become obedient to the faith. Luke cares about the Spirit's work. Luke's cares that Spirit's sovereign work through the preached Word proves the Gospel's power to redeem.
- It's about disciples for Luke. Christ followers. When Jesus called His disciples He said, "Follow me." A disciple is a follower, one who trusts and believes in a teacher and follows that teacher's words and example. Making disciples is the Great Commission. The mission of the church. Acts 6:1 is the first use of the word *disciple* in the Book of Acts. Luke will use it 27 more times. Disciples put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. As their Lord and Saviour. And live out transformed lives to His praise and glory. Legitimate church growth is about the multiplication of disciples to the church.

Summation

- Acts 6:1-7 reveals that the Spirit multiplies disciples as the Gospel triumphs, transforming hearts and expanding Christ's ransomed Church.

Transition

With multiplication came tension. And the Spirit's unifying power.

2) Uniting for purpose (Acts 6:1b, 5-6)

there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.⁵ This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch.⁶ They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

- The conflict at the end of verse 1 arises between the Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews. The Hellenistic Jews lived in the diaspora. Scattered among the Gentiles. They spoke Greek. They used the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The word *hellēn* means Greek. Hellenistic Jews are Greeks.
- The Hebraic Jews remained in Judea, near Jerusalem. They spoke Aramaic. Because they were from Jerusalem the Hebraic Jews had eminence in Jerusalem. Hellenistic Jews were foreigners. And so marginalised. It makes sense that the Hebraic widows received charitable care. There was likely an existing mechanism that took care of them. A list they were on. Overlooking the Hellenistic widows was understandable. There was grumbling. There was complaining. There was disharmony. There was disunity.
- The resolution to this problem is so interesting. The church appointed 7 men to oversee the mercy ministry. 7 men to distribute food to the widows. Now mark this. The names of all 7 men – Philippos, Prochoros, Nikanōr, Timōn, Parmenas, Nikolaos – all 7 men have Hellenistic names. The eminent Hebraic Jews gave up the distribution of charity. They handed over the task to the marginalised.
- This unity was not for harmony's sake alone. This unity was for mission. The Church is Christ's body, ransomed by His blood to display His reconciling power. When Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews served together, they proved the Gospel's victory over division. The apostles didn't negotiate a compromise; they unleashed Spirit-filled servants to turn tension into testimony.

Summation

- Acts 6:1-7 shows that the Spirit unites Christ's body to magnify the Gospel. Where Satan sows division, the Spirit sends servants—so the world sees Christ's ransom at work.

Transition

Unity is never an end in itself. The reconciliation between Hellenistic and Hebraic believers created the perfect conditions to raise up Spirit-empowered servants who could meet practical needs while preserving the apostles' focus on prayer and ministry of the Word.

3) Empowering for service (Acts 6:2-4)

² The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

- Some of God's people are set aside for spiritual acts service. Teachers who spread the word. Edify saints. Evangelise the lost. Some of God's people are set aside for practical acts service. Servants who engage in various kinds of ministries. Put those two together, and churches flourish and grow.
- God's people who are set aside for spiritual acts of service in Acts 6:1-7 are the Apostles. They say of themselves in verse 4, But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. That word *ministry* is *diakonia*. It's where we get the word **deacon** from. The apostles are **deacons**, **servants**, **ministers**, of the word. **Spiritual servants**.
- God's people who are set aside for practical acts of service in Acts 6:1-7 are the 7 men of good repute. Accord to verse 2 they were to serve tables. That word *serve* is *diakoneō*. Again, it's the word we get **deacon** from. The waiters are **deacons**, **servants**, **ministers**, of the word. **Practical servants**.
- The apostles and the seven weren't competing for importance; they were collaborating for impact. The apostles preached; the seven served.
- While these 7 men are not called **deacons** they bear characteristics and perform duties of **deacons**. A **deacon** is one of two recognised offices in the New Testament church. Along with elders, they come from the membership of a local church. And serve the local church by appointment. **These 7 men bear the characteristics of deacons**. They're to be men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. You'll notice their **walk**, their **witness** and their **wisdom**. **These 7 men bear the duties of deacons**. **Deacons** serve the local church. **Deacons** are not a decision making committee. **Deacons** are not an oversight committee. **Deacons** are recognised servants. Finally, **Note the appointment of these 7 men**. You'll notice **the congregation choose** them and **the apostles appoint** them. Members of congregations take part in the appointment of the church's leaders.

Summation

- At it's heart Acts 6:1-7 reveals that the Spirit empowers servants so the Gospel triumphs. When leaders preach and members serve—all in the Spirit's power—the Church becomes a living witness to Christ's ransom."*

Transition

The gospel triumphs as disciples multiply, unity strengthens, and servants are empowered.

How does this passage connect to the gospel?

- The heart of **Acts 6:1-7** is service. The apostles serve by preaching. The seven serve by doing. Jesus Himself tied service to the gospel when He said, the Son of Man did not come to be served [**διακονέω**], but to serve [**διακονέω**], and to give his life as a ransom for many. His death and resurrection are His ultimate acts of service for the people He ransomed. Those that have believed this message go on to serve one another as an ongoing effect of the work of the Spirit within them.

Believers, how ought you to live?

- Embrace your role in Christ's ransomed church by serving in the Spirit's power. Just like the apostles served, and the seven served, you are called to steward your time, talents, treasure, and testimony, for the advance of the Gospel. For those of you juggling careers and kids: Service starts where you are, with what you have.

Unbelievers, how ought you to respond?

- Just as the priests in **Acts 6:7** became obedient to the faith, you are called to surrender to the Gospel. Christ came to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Christ is ready to redeem you; and the Spirit is able to renew you. Right now, heed the call. Repent and put your faith and trust in Him.

Church, how does this teaching relate to our constitution?

- Over time, as our church has grown and developed, some areas of our constitution no longer reflect how we function. To address this, the church has approved the formation of a constitution committee. The team is presently working to revise the deacon section, ensuring it is both faithful to Scripture and practical for our church today. Three key principles from this passage shape our approach:
 1. Just as the seven were chosen for being full of the Spirit and wisdom, our constitution must require deacons to be recognised as filled with the Holy Spirit. This ensures that practical service flows from spiritual vitality, not mere competence.
 2. The whole company affirmed the seven, reflected in our process of member nominations, and a clear congregational mandate. This guards against top-down control and fosters unity, ensuring deacons are recognised by the body.
 3. The apostles delegated needs to the seven, mirroring our charge that deacons serve in practical ministries as designated by the executive. This empowers deacons to address material needs with Gospel intentionality.

Conclusion

- Remember my cheesy supreme? Layers working together. The bread. The cheese. The tomato. Each playing its part to create something greater.
- The bread reminds us: Disciples multiply when the Gospel triumphs (**Acts 6:1a, 7**). Not by human strategy, but by the Spirit's power.
- The cheese shows us: Unity thrives when the marginalised are lifted up (**Acts 6:1b, 5-6**). Not by compromise, but by Spirit-filled service.
- The tomato at the centre? That's the heart of it all: Empowered service (**Acts 6:2-4**). Not competition, but collaboration. Apostles preaching, deacons serving, all for the glory of Christ.
- This is the Gospel recipe. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many, His ransomed Church now serves in His power.
- Believers, as part of this glorious design, however you are called to serve, serve with the Spirit's fullness. Let your life proclaim Christ's ransom is real.
- To those still outside the faith, Christ calls you to obey the Gospel. He served you by laying down His life so you could be ransomed. Today, surrender to Him.
- Let's pray for the Spirit to do in Benoni Baptist Church what He did in Acts: multiply disciples, unite hearts, and empower servants. Amen.

Argument

- Christ's ransomed Church, ministering in His Spirit's power, sees His Gospel triumph.

Arrangement

Three Marks of a Spirit-powered church:

1. Discipling for growth (**Acts 6:1a, 7**)
2. Uniting for purpose (**Acts 6:1b, 5-6**)
3. Empowering for service (**Acts 6:2-4**)

Closing Prayer

If you're ready to serve, whether teaching kids or mentoring a new believer, speak to me after the service. If you're surrendering to Christ today, come to the front, there'll be an elder available to pray with you.

Benediction

- **Ephesians 3:20-21**, ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us— ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.