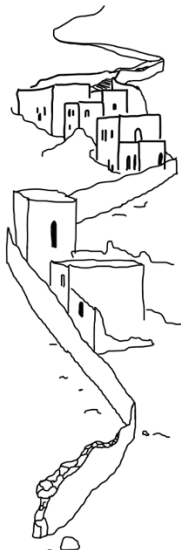




1. What was the complaint that was brought before the Apostles? (6:1) How could this complaint affect the church?
2. Might there be a particular group in our church whose physical or spiritual needs are being overlooked?
3. How can we help all generations and socioeconomic classes feel valued and ministered to within the church? What can you do, personally, to aid in this?
4. Why did the Twelve choose prayer and teaching over caring for the poor? (6:2-4)
5. How can we, as a church, continue to prioritize and savor the Word of God and prayer?
6. As you think about Acts 6:1-7, in what ways was serving necessary for the church? In what ways is meeting physical needs a spiritual responsibility?
7. As the needs and composition of our church body change over time, what are some ways we can adapt to those changes and serve our fellow believers better? Why is it important that we pay attention to this?
8. Although Acts 6 does not refer to the 7 servants chosen to minister to the widows as deacons, the principle of designating a group of laborers for this task is probably what led to the creation of that office at a later time. Review 1 Timothy 3:8-13. In what way are the qualifications of a deacon to be exhibited by all Christ followers?
9. The church today needs people to serve for the same reason as the first fellowship in Jerusalem. How can we all help meet the needs of our church body in our day?
10. What kind of result did the early church see when they addressed needs like this one? (6:7) How does that give you hope for the future of our church?



Division, Distraction, and Delegation
Leader Notes for Acts 6:1-7



In Acts 6, Jerusalem was still the church's only location. It would take a while for the gospel to break into the Gentile world, and the early years of the church were mainly spent forming and growing in the same city in which Christ died and was buried and rose and ascended.

As the number of believers increased, so did the complexity of ministry. It is estimated that the church may have been more than 20,000 people at this point. Even amid the explosive growth, they still maintained a communal style of living - sharing finances and resources in the church - and they had instituted a daily distribution of food for those in need, including widows.

Some of these widows were Jewish, but Hellenistic, Grecian Jews. Influenced by Greek culture, language and style, they were different than the native Hebrews. A dispute broke out as the Hellenists felt their widows were neglected when the daily distribution took place (6:1). Their complaint was taken all the way to the apostles. This was a crucial moment in the church's life, as it could have led to division within the church and taken away from the work that the apostles were called to do.

The apostles responded to the complaint by saying they should not neglect the word of God to serve tables (6:2), but instead devote themselves to the word and prayer. Instead of handling the distribution themselves, the apostles thought, the church should select seven men from among themselves who are of good reputation, men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, who would be put in charge over the daily distribution of food (6:3). The qualifications lead us to believe that the apostles wanted servants who were prepared and ready for the task. The people agreed, and seven men were chosen.

These men who were presented to the apostles were appointed to the ministry (6:6). Interestingly all seven had Greek names indicating they were Hellenists. Two of the seven, Stephen and Philip, would play key roles in the next few passages of the book (Acts 6-8).

Churches change over time. New people get saved and added to the church. Long-time believers grow older, and at some point go to be with the Lord. Children grow up, and people move in and out. We need to keep looking for ways to serve all of these people as the needs and composition of our church change.

At the end of this section, Luke gives a progress report - "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." (6:7) This gives us a reminder that great things can be accomplished when we work together!