

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 6 — The Choosing of the Seven and the Rise of Stephen

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 6 shows the early church facing a different kind of challenge.

Until this point, much of the pressure against the church had come from the outside.

Religious leaders had threatened the apostles.

The apostles had been arrested.

They had been beaten.

They had been commanded to stop preaching.

Yet the church continued growing.

Now a problem develops inside the church.

As the number of disciples increases, some Greek-speaking Jewish believers complain that their widows are being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

This issue had the potential to create division between two groups of believers.

The apostles do not ignore the complaint.

They also refuse to abandon their God-given responsibility of prayer and preaching.

Instead, they develop a wise solution.

Seven qualified men are selected to oversee the practical ministry.

These men must be:

Respected.

Full of the Holy Spirit.

Full of wisdom.

The first man named is Stephen.

Stephen will soon become one of the most significant figures in the early chapters of Acts.

He is described as:

Full of faith.

Full of the Holy Spirit.

Full of God's grace.

Full of power.

Stephen performs great wonders and signs.

He speaks with such wisdom that his opponents cannot successfully answer him.

Unable to defeat his message through honest debate, they turn to false accusations.

Stephen is seized.

False witnesses testify against him.

He is brought before the Sanhedrin.

Yet as everyone looks at him, they see something remarkable:

“His face was like the face of an angel.”

Acts 6 therefore teaches several important truths.

Growth creates new challenges.

Church problems must be handled wisely.

Practical ministry matters.

Prayer and preaching must remain priorities.

Character matters more than position.

Spirit-filled servants can have powerful ministries.

And when truth cannot be defeated honestly, opposition may turn to slander.

The central truth of Acts 6 is:

A healthy church responds to growth with wisdom, protects both spiritual and practical ministry, chooses Spirit-filled servants, and continues advancing the Word of God despite opposition.

I. GROWTH CREATES A NEW PROBLEM

Acts 6:1 — The Widows Are Being Overlooked

“In those days, as the number of disciples kept growing, some Greek-speaking believers began complaining against the Hebrew-speaking believers. They said their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.”

The church was growing rapidly.

Growth was good.

But growth also created administrative challenges.

The complaint involved two groups.

Greek-Speaking Believers

These were Jewish believers whose primary language and cultural background were more Greek.

Hebrew-Speaking Believers

These were Jewish believers more closely connected with Hebrew or Aramaic language and Judean culture.

The complaint concerned widows.

Some widows were being neglected in the church's daily assistance.

Cross References

Acts 4:35

Believers brought the proceeds from property sales and placed them at the apostles' feet, and the resources were distributed to each person according to need.

James 1:27

Pure and genuine religion before God the Father includes caring for orphans and widows in their trouble and keeping oneself unstained by the world.

Deuteronomy 24:19

When you harvest your field and accidentally leave a bundle of grain behind, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow so that the Lord your God may bless the work of your hands.

Spiritual Principle

A growing church must pay attention to people who can easily be overlooked.

Widows were among the most vulnerable members of society.

God repeatedly commands His people to care for them.

Key Truth

Spiritual growth should never make a church less compassionate toward practical needs.

II. COMPLAINT CAN BECOME DIVISION IF IT IS IGNORED

The problem involved more than food.

It had the potential to create resentment between cultural groups.

One group could have concluded:

“They care more about their people than ours.”

That kind of suspicion can destroy unity quickly.

Spiritual Principle

Many church conflicts become larger because legitimate concerns are ignored until they become deep resentments.

The apostles respond before the problem destroys fellowship.

Application

Wise leadership listens carefully when people say:

“Someone is being overlooked.”

Not every complaint is correct.

But every serious complaint deserves fair consideration.

III. THE APOSTLES IDENTIFY THEIR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

Acts 6:2 — “It Is Not Right for Us to Neglect the Word”

“So the twelve apostles gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It is not right for us to neglect preaching the word of God in order to wait on tables.’”

The apostles are not saying that serving food is beneath them.

The issue is calling and priority.

Someone must care for the widows.

But the apostles must not abandon the ministry Christ specifically gave them.

Cross References

Exodus 18:17

Moses' father-in-law told him, "What you are doing is not good. You and the people will wear yourselves out because this responsibility is too heavy for you to carry alone."

Acts 2:42

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer.

1 Corinthians 9:16

Paul said, "If I preach the gospel, I have no reason to boast because I am obligated to preach. How terrible it would be for me if I did not preach the gospel."

Spiritual Principle

Good ministries can compete with the best ministry if leaders do not understand their calling.

Serving widows mattered.

Preaching mattered.

Prayer mattered.

The solution was not choosing one and abandoning the other.

The solution was faithful delegation.

IV. DELEGATION IS NOT NEGLECT

Some leaders struggle to delegate because they believe:

"If I do not do everything myself, I am not being faithful."

Acts 6 teaches the opposite.

Trying to do everything can cause leaders to neglect what God specifically called them to do.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Delegation is not abandoning responsibility; it is assigning responsibility wisely so every necessary ministry can be done well.

V. SEVEN QUALIFIED MEN ARE NEEDED

Acts 6:3 — Character Before Responsibility

“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are respected, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.”

The apostles establish qualifications.

Notice what they do not say.

Choose:

The wealthiest men.

The most popular men.

The best businessmen.

The strongest personalities.

They say choose men who are:

Respected

Their character must be known.

Full of the Holy Spirit

Their lives must demonstrate spiritual maturity.

Full of Wisdom

They must know how to handle people, problems, and resources wisely.

Cross References

Exodus 18:21

Moses was told, “Select capable men from among the people—men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain—and appoint them over groups of the people.”

Deuteronomy 1:13

Moses told Israel, “Choose wise, understanding, and respected men from each tribe, and I will appoint them as leaders over you.”

1 Timothy 3:8

Those who serve in recognized ministry must be worthy of respect, sincere, not controlled by wine, and not greedy for dishonest gain.

Spiritual Principle

Even practical church ministry requires spiritual character.

Handling food and finances may appear administrative.

God still cared deeply about the character of those doing it.

VI. THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER AND THE WORD

Acts 6:4

“And we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

This verse gives two great priorities of apostolic ministry.

Prayer

They needed communion with God.

Ministry of the Word

They needed to teach God's truth.

Cross References

Colossians 4:2

Continue faithfully in prayer. Stay spiritually alert and remain thankful.

2 Timothy 4:2

Preach the Word. Be ready whether the opportunity seems convenient or inconvenient.

Correct, rebuke, and encourage people with great patience and careful teaching.

Romans 12:12

Rejoice in hope, remain patient in trouble, and continue faithfully in prayer.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The preacher who has no time to pray and no time to study the Word has allowed something to replace his primary calling.

Programs matter.

Administration matters.

Visitation matters.

Meetings matter.

But prayer and the Word must remain central.

VII. THE CHURCH ACCEPTS THE PLAN

Acts 6:5 — Seven Men Are Chosen

“This plan pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, who had become a follower of Judaism.”

The congregation responds positively.

The seven are selected.

Interestingly, all seven names are Greek names.

This may indicate sensitivity toward the Greek-speaking believers who had raised the concern.

Stephen

Stephen receives special attention.

He is described as:

“A man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.”

Philip

Philip later becomes a major evangelistic figure in Acts 8.

Nicolas

Luke specifically notes that he was from Antioch and had converted to Judaism.

Cross References

Numbers 27:18

The Lord told Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him.”

Acts 11:20

Some believers from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began speaking to Greek-speaking people also, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus.

Acts 8:5

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ to the people there.

Spiritual Principle

God often prepares today's servant for tomorrow's larger assignment.

Stephen begins with practical ministry.

Philip begins among the seven.

Both later become powerful public witnesses.

VIII. NO MINISTRY IS “JUST” A SMALL MINISTRY

Stephen was selected to help ensure fair distribution.

Soon he would preach one of the most powerful sermons in Acts.

Philip helped serve.

Soon he would evangelize Samaria and lead an Ethiopian man to Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness in one assignment can prepare a believer for another assignment.

Never say:

“I am only serving tables.”

If God gave the assignment, it matters.

IX. THE APOSTLES PRAY AND LAY HANDS ON THEM

Acts 6:6

“They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.”

The church recognizes and commissions these men.

The laying on of hands represented identification, recognition, and assignment.

Cross References

1 Timothy 4:14

Paul told Timothy, “Do not neglect the spiritual gift given to you through prophecy when the elders laid their hands upon you.”

Numbers 27:23

Moses laid his hands upon Joshua and commissioned him, just as the Lord had commanded through Moses.

Acts 13:3

After fasting and praying, the church leaders laid their hands upon Barnabas and Saul and sent them out.

Spiritual Principle

Church ministry should be approached prayerfully and deliberately.

Leadership assignment is not merely filling an empty position.

It involves spiritual responsibility.

X. THE WORD OF GOD CONTINUES TO SPREAD

Acts 6:7 — Rapid Growth Continues

“The word of God spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem grew rapidly. Even a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”

The solution to the church's internal problem produces healthy results.

The practical needs are addressed.

The apostles remain focused.

The Word spreads.

The church grows.

Cross References

Acts 12:24

But the Word of God continued to grow and spread.

Acts 19:20

In this powerful way, the Word of the Lord continued growing and prevailing.

John 12:42

Even many among the rulers believed in Jesus, though some were afraid to confess Him publicly because of the Pharisees.

Remarkable Detail

Luke says:

“A large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”

These were men deeply connected to Israel's temple system.

Yet they were coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Key Truth

The gospel was penetrating even circles that had previously resisted Jesus.

XI. A HEALTHY CHURCH STRUCTURE HELPS THE GOSPEL ADVANCE

Acts 6:7 follows immediately after the church solves its ministry problem.

That connection is important.

Disorganization can hinder mission.

Unresolved conflict can distract leaders.

Neglected people can damage unity.

Wise structure can help remove unnecessary obstacles.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Church organization is not the mission, but good organization can protect the mission.

XII. STEPHEN IS FULL OF GRACE AND POWER

Acts 6:8

“Now Stephen, full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.”

Stephen had been chosen for practical ministry.

Now his public spiritual ministry becomes visible.

Cross References

Acts 4:33

With great power the apostles continued testifying to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace rested upon them all.

Luke 24:19

The disciples described Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet powerful in deed and word before God and all the people.

2 Corinthians 12:12

Paul said, “The signs of a true apostolic ministry were demonstrated among you with great perseverance through signs, wonders, and mighty works.”

Notice Stephen's Description

He was full of:

Faith.

The Holy Spirit.

Grace.

Power.

Spiritual Principle

Powerful ministry should flow from a Spirit-filled character rather than merely visible gifts.

XIII. OPPOSITION ARISES AGAINST STEPHEN

Acts 6:9

“Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen—as it was called—Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria, as well as from Cilicia and Asia. They began to argue with Stephen.”

As Stephen's influence increases, opposition appears.

Members of a synagogue begin debating with him.

Cross References

Acts 2:9

Among those present at Pentecost were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and people from many regions of the Roman world.

Acts 21:39

Paul said, “I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city.”

Acts 9:29

Saul spoke and debated with Greek-speaking Jews, but they attempted to kill him.

Spiritual Principle

Effective ministry often attracts opposition.

Truth shines.

Resistance rises.

XIV. THEY CANNOT DEFEAT STEPHEN'S WISDOM

Acts 6:10

“But they could not stand up against the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.”

Stephen was not merely clever.

His wisdom was connected with the Holy Spirit.

Cross References

Luke 21:15

Jesus said, “I will give you words and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict.”

Exodus 4:12

God told Moses, “Now go. I will help you speak and teach you what to say.”

Luke 12:12

Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

Key Truth

Stephen's opponents could argue with him, but they could not overcome the Spirit-given wisdom of his message.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The servant of God does not need to win through anger when truth and Spirit-given wisdom are sufficient.

XV. WHEN ARGUMENT FAILS, THEY TURN TO SLANDER

Acts 6:11

“Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.’”

They could not defeat Stephen honestly.

So they manufactured accusations.

Cross References

Matthew 26:59

The chief priests and the entire council searched for false testimony against Jesus so they could put Him to death.

1 Kings 21:10

Jezebel ordered that two dishonest men be seated opposite Naboth and falsely accuse him of cursing God and the king.

Psalms 27:12

Do not hand me over to my enemies, because false witnesses have risen against me and breathe out violence.

Spiritual Principle

When people cannot answer truth, they may attack the character of the person speaking it.

Slander is not proof that someone is wrong.

XVI. FALSE ACCUSATION HAS A LONG BIBLICAL HISTORY

Joseph was falsely accused.

Naboth was falsely accused.

Jeremiah was accused.

Jesus was falsely accused.

Stephen is falsely accused.

Later Paul would experience similar accusations.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness does not guarantee that people will represent you fairly.

The believer's responsibility is to remain truthful even when others are not.

XVII. THE CROWD IS STIRRED UP

Acts 6:12

“So they stirred up the people, the elders, and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.”

Stephen's opponents manipulate public opinion.

Cross References

Matthew 26:57

Those who arrested Jesus took Him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and elders had gathered.

Mark 14:1

The chief priests and teachers of the law were looking secretly for a way to arrest Jesus and kill Him.

Acts 21:30

The entire city became stirred up, and the people seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple.

Spiritual Principle

Crowds can be manipulated by accusation, fear, and emotion.

Truth must never be decided merely by majority reaction.

XVIII. STEPHEN STANDS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Stephen now stands before the same council that had confronted:

Jesus.

Peter.

John.

The apostles.

Now Stephen.

Spiritual Principle

The opposition may change targets, but the conflict remains centered upon Jesus Christ and His gospel.

XIX. FALSE WITNESSES TESTIFY

Acts 6:13

“They produced false witnesses, who testified, ‘This man never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.’”

The accusations focus on:

The temple.

The law of Moses.

Stephen's enemies portray him as an enemy of Israel's sacred institutions.

Cross References

Matthew 26:61

False witnesses said about Jesus, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy God's temple and rebuild it in three days.’”

Mark 14:58

Some testified, “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days build another not made with hands.’”

Jeremiah 26:11

The priests and prophets told the officials, “This man deserves death because he has prophesied against this city.”

Spiritual Principle

False accusations often contain distorted pieces of truth.

Stephen likely taught about Christ's fulfillment of the law and temple.

His enemies twisted that teaching into blasphemy.

XX. JESUS AND STEPHEN FACE SIMILAR ACCUSATIONS

There is a deliberate similarity between Stephen's trial and Jesus' trial.

Both faced:

False witnesses.

Religious hostility.

Charges involving the temple.

The Sanhedrin.

Distorted testimony.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faithfulness to Jesus may cause His servants to walk paths that resemble the path their Master walked.

XXI. THEY ACCUSE STEPHEN OF TEACHING TEMPLE DESTRUCTION

Acts 6:14

“We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

Again the accusation centers on Jesus and the temple.

Cross References

John 2:19

Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Matthew 24:2

Jesus said concerning the temple buildings, “Do you see all these things? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left upon another. Every one will be thrown down.”

Mark 13:2

Jesus said, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another. Every stone will be thrown down.”

Important Truth

Jesus did predict the destruction of the temple.

But He also spoke of His own body as the true temple in John 2.

Stephen's message likely emphasized that God's redemptive purposes centered in Christ, not merely in a physical building.

Spiritual Principle

Religious people can become so attached to sacred structures and traditions that they fail to recognize the One those things were meant to point toward.

XXII. STEPHEN'S FACE IS LIKE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL

Acts 6:15

“Everyone who was sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”

This is one of the most remarkable descriptions in Acts.

Stephen stands accused.

His enemies lie about him.

He is surrounded by hostile leaders.

Yet his face reflects unusual peace and radiance.

Cross References

Exodus 34:29

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai carrying the two tablets of testimony, he did not realize that the skin of his face was shining because he had been speaking with God.

2 Corinthians 3:7

Paul described the glory connected with Moses' ministry, saying that the Israelites could not look steadily at Moses' face because of its fading glory.

Matthew 28:3

The angel's appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was white as snow.

Spiritual Principle

God can give His servants supernatural peace even when circumstances around them are hostile.

Stephen's face did not reflect panic.

It reflected heaven.

XXIII. THE FACE REVEALS THE HEART

Stephen was facing lies.

Yet there is no record of rage.

No panic.

No desperation.

No revenge.

His face appeared:

“Like the face of an angel.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A Spirit-filled life is often most visible when pressure reveals what is inside.

Pressure does not create character.

It exposes character.

XXIV. FIVE GREAT CHARACTERISTICS OF STEPHEN

Acts 6 gives a remarkable spiritual portrait.

1. Stephen Was Full of Faith

He trusted God.

2. Stephen Was Full of the Holy Spirit

His ministry flowed from God's presence.

3. Stephen Was Full of Grace

His power was not harsh or self-centered.

4. Stephen Was Full of Power

God worked through him.

5. Stephen Was Full of Wisdom

His opponents could not defeat his Spirit-directed reasoning.

Spiritual Principle

Stephen's public power rested upon private character.

XXV. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 6

1. Church Growth Creates New Responsibilities

Growth is good.

But growth produces new needs.

Principle:

Healthy growth requires wise adjustment.

2. Problems Should Be Addressed Before They Divide the Church

The apostles did not ignore the widows' complaint.

Principle:

Wise leaders deal with genuine concerns rather than hoping they disappear.

3. Prayer and the Word Must Remain Central

The apostles protected their primary ministry.

Principle:

A church loses spiritual strength when prayer and Scripture are crowded out by constant administration.

4. Practical Ministry Requires Spiritual Character

The seven had to be respected, Spirit-filled, and wise.

Principle:

There are no spiritually insignificant assignments in God's church.

5. Faithfulness in Small Assignments Can Lead to Greater Responsibility

Stephen and Philip began serving practical needs.

Both became powerful witnesses.

Principle:

Never despise the assignment God gives you today.

6. Truth Often Produces Opposition

Stephen's ministry brought resistance.

Principle:

Opposition is not always evidence that something is wrong; sometimes people oppose precisely because truth has exposed them.

7. God Gives Peace Under Pressure

Stephen's face reflected unusual calm even before hostile judges.

Principle:

The Holy Spirit can produce heavenly peace in earthly conflict.

XXVI. WHAT ACTS 6 TEACHES ABOUT CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Acts 6 provides several principles for healthy leadership.

Leaders Must Listen

The apostles listened to a legitimate complaint.

Leaders Must Prioritize

They knew their primary responsibility.

Leaders Must Delegate

They did not attempt to control everything personally.

Leaders Must Establish Qualifications

Character mattered.

Leaders Must Involve the Congregation

The believers participated in selecting the seven.

Leaders Must Pray

The apostles prayed before commissioning them.

Leaders Must Protect the Mission

The final result was that God's Word continued spreading.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Healthy leadership is not doing everything; it is making sure everything necessary is faithfully handled while keeping God's priorities central.

XXVII. WHAT ACTS 6 TEACHES ABOUT SERVING

Serving tables might sound ordinary.

But the men chosen for this responsibility needed to be:

Full of the Spirit.

Full of wisdom.

Respected.

That tells us how God views service.

Spiritual Principle

God does not divide ministry into important spiritual work and unimportant practical work.

Everything done faithfully for Christ matters.

Helping a widow matters.

Preaching matters.

Prayer matters.

Administration matters.

Encouragement matters.

Giving matters.

Evangelism matters.

Different ministries.

One Lord.

XXVIII. THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING PEOPLE

The original problem involved widows who were:

“Being overlooked.”

That phrase should challenge every church.

Who is easily overlooked?

The elderly.

Widows.

Shut-ins.

Visitors.

Poor families.

People without influence.

People from different cultures.

People without powerful connections.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus repeatedly directs attention toward people society tends to overlook.

A healthy church should do the same.

XXIX. WHAT STEPHEN TEACHES ABOUT SPIRITUAL POWER

Stephen was powerful.

But notice the order of his descriptions.

Acts 6:5:

Full of faith and the Holy Spirit.

Acts 6:8:

Full of grace and power.

Character precedes visible power.

Principle

Never pursue spiritual power while neglecting spiritual character.

God is more concerned about what a servant is than merely what a servant can do.

XXX. WHEN PEOPLE CANNOT DEFEAT THE MESSAGE

Stephen's opponents tried debate.

They failed.

Then they moved to:

Secret persuasion.

False witnesses.

Public agitation.

Arrest.

Spiritual Principle

When honest argument ends, dishonest opposition often begins.

The Christian must remain committed to truth even when others abandon truth.

XXXI. HOW TO RESPOND TO FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Stephen's example gives several principles.

Remain Calm

His face displayed peace.

Remain Truthful

He did not answer lies with lies.

Remain Spirit-Filled

His wisdom came from the Spirit.

Remain Ready to Speak

Acts 7 will show Stephen giving a powerful biblical defense.

Trust God

Stephen's future was not in the Sanhedrin's hands ultimately.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You cannot always control what people say about you, but you can control whether their accusations change your faithfulness.

XXXII. THE WORD OF GOD KEPT SPREADING

Acts 6:7 is a key verse.

A church conflict had developed.

But after wise action:

The problem was addressed.

Leaders were appointed.

The apostles stayed focused.

Unity was protected.

Then:

“The word of God spread.”

Spiritual Principle

Resolving internal problems biblically can remove distractions that hinder outward mission.

A divided church has difficulty presenting a united gospel witness.

XXXIII. EVEN PRIESTS BELIEVED

Luke specifically mentions that many priests became obedient to the faith.

This is significant because priests were deeply invested in the temple system.

Yet the gospel was reaching them.

Spiritual Principle

No group should be considered unreachable.

The gospel can reach:

Religious leaders.

Skeptics.

Outsiders.

Insiders.

The highly educated.

The ordinary.

The powerful.

The overlooked.

XXXIV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What caused the complaint in Acts 6?

Some Greek-speaking believers believed that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

The complaint involved both practical care and the possibility of cultural division.

Question 2

Did the apostles say caring for widows was unimportant?

No.

They created a structure specifically to make sure the need was handled properly.

Their point was that they should not abandon their primary responsibility of prayer and preaching to manage every practical detail themselves.

Question 3

Why were seven men chosen?

Seven qualified men were selected to take responsibility for the daily distribution so the apostles could remain focused upon prayer and the ministry of the Word.

The text does not explain why the specific number seven was chosen.

Question 4

What qualifications were required?

The men needed to be:

Respected.

Full of the Holy Spirit.

Full of wisdom.

This demonstrates that spiritual character mattered even for practical ministry.

Question 5

Were these seven men officially called deacons?

Acts 6 does not directly give them the title deacon.

However, their service has often been viewed as closely related to the later ministry of deacons because they were appointed to meet practical needs within the church.

We should distinguish what the text explicitly says from later church terminology.

Question 6

Why were prayer and the ministry of the Word so important to the apostles?

These were central to their calling.

They needed prayer because ministry depends upon God.

They needed the Word because the church needed biblical truth and the gospel needed to continue spreading.

Question 7

Who was Stephen?

Stephen was one of the seven men chosen.

He was described as:

- Full of faith.
- Full of the Holy Spirit.
- Full of grace.
- Full of power.
- Full of wisdom.

He later became the first Christian martyr recorded in Acts.

Question 8

Why could Stephen's opponents not defeat him in debate?

Acts 6:10 says they could not stand against:

“The wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.”

His effectiveness came from Spirit-given wisdom rather than mere intellectual skill.

Question 9

What did Stephen's opponents do when they could not defeat his arguments?

They secretly arranged false accusations.

They stirred up the people.

They produced false witnesses.

They had Stephen arrested.

This demonstrates the increasing hostility against the gospel.

Question 10

Why were the accusations against Stephen similar to those against Jesus?

Both were falsely accused regarding the temple.

Both faced the Sanhedrin.

Both had their teachings distorted.

Luke's account shows Stephen following a path similar to his Lord.

Question 11

What does it mean that Stephen's face was like the face of an angel?

The description communicates unusual radiance, peace, and divine favor.

The exact physical appearance is not explained further.

The emphasis is that Stephen displayed remarkable heavenly calm while standing before hostile accusers.

Question 12

What is the main lesson of Acts 6 for the church today?

The church must protect unity, care fairly for vulnerable people, choose spiritually qualified servants, preserve prayer and biblical teaching, and remain faithful when opposition arises.

XXXV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 6 asks several important questions.

Do I Notice People Who Are Being Overlooked?

Who around me may need care?

How Do I Respond to Complaints?

Do I become defensive?

Or do I ask whether there is a legitimate concern that needs attention?

Do I Understand My Primary Calling?

Am I allowing good activities to distract me from what God specifically assigned me to do?

Am I Willing to Delegate?

Or do I believe everything must depend upon me?

Is My Character Strong Enough for Responsibility?

Am I respected?

Spirit-filled?

Wise?

Do I Consider Practical Service Important?

Or do I only value visible ministry?

How Do I Respond When People Misrepresent Me?

With anger?

Retaliation?

Or Spirit-produced peace?

Does Pressure Reveal Christlike character in Me?

What shows on my face when life becomes difficult?

XXXVI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“A Growing Church Must Grow in Wisdom as Well as Numbers”

Acts 6 begins:

“The number of disciples kept growing.”

Growth was wonderful.

But growth created complexity.

More people meant:

More needs.

More relationships.

More cultural differences.

More responsibilities.

More opportunities for misunderstanding.

The apostles did not treat growth as proof that everything was automatically healthy.

They adapted wisely.

They protected prayer.

They protected preaching.

They strengthened practical care.

They involved qualified servants.

And what happened?

“The Word of God spread.”

Principle

Numerical growth without spiritual wisdom can create disorder, but Spirit-guided structure can help growth become healthy and sustainable.

XXXVII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Character Must Come Before Position”

The seven were not selected merely because work needed to be done.

The apostles established qualifications first.

Before responsibility:

Reputation.

Before position:

Character.

Before public recognition:

Spiritual maturity.

Principle

The church should never lower spiritual qualifications simply because a position needs to be filled.

An empty position is safer than an unqualified leader.

XXXVIII. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 6 begins with a complaint.

It ends with Stephen standing before the Sanhedrin with the face of an angel.

Between those two moments we see a church learning how to grow faithfully.

The early believers were not perfect.

Even a Spirit-empowered church experienced problems.

People were overlooked.

Complaints developed.

Cultural tensions threatened unity.

But the presence of a problem did not mean the church had failed.

What mattered was how they responded.

The apostles listened.

They acted.

They delegated.

They established qualifications.

They prayed.

They protected the ministry of the Word.

And the church continued growing.

That is an important lesson.

Healthy churches do not pretend problems do not exist.

Healthy churches handle problems biblically.

Acts 6 also reminds us that practical servants can become powerful witnesses.

Stephen did not begin this chapter behind a pulpit.

He began among seven men chosen to serve people.

Yet his faithfulness revealed a man filled with:

Faith.

The Spirit.

Grace.

Power.

Wisdom.

Then opposition came.

But Stephen remained faithful.

His enemies could not defeat his message honestly.

So they lied.

They twisted his words.

They stirred up a crowd.

They brought him before powerful leaders.

Yet when everyone looked at Stephen:

They did not see terror.

They saw something resembling heaven.

That may be the greatest challenge of Acts 6.

When pressure comes:

What do people see in us?

Fear?

Anger?

Bitterness?

Pride?

Or evidence that we have been with God?

Acts 6 calls the church to become a people of:

Fairness.

Wisdom.

Prayer.

Biblical truth.

Service.

Character.

Courage.

Peace under pressure.

And when those things are present:

The Word of God continues to spread.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the lessons of Acts Chapter 6.

Give Your church wisdom as it grows.

Help us never overlook people who need compassion, care, and support.

Open our eyes to widows, the elderly, the poor, the forgotten, the lonely, and those who may feel pushed to the side.

Give church leaders wisdom to address problems fairly and quickly.

Protect churches from division caused by resentment, favoritism, cultural differences, or neglect.

Give pastors and teachers courage to protect the ministry of prayer and the Word.

Keep administrative responsibilities from crowding out spiritual priorities.

Raise up faithful servants.

Give us men and women who are respected, Spirit-filled, wise, humble, and trustworthy.

Teach us that no ministry done for Christ is insignificant.

Help us serve faithfully whether anyone notices or not.

Give us the character of Stephen.

Make us full of faith.

Make us full of Your Spirit.

Make us full of grace.

Give us wisdom.

Give us courage.

When opposition comes, help us speak truth without anger.

When people falsely accuse us, keep us from retaliation.

When pressure becomes intense, fill us with heavenly peace.

May our lives reflect Your presence so clearly that even our enemies recognize something different about us.

And through faithful preaching, faithful prayer, faithful service, and faithful witness:

Let Your Word continue to spread.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“And we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” — Acts 6:4

Central Truth

A healthy and growing church protects unity, cares for overlooked people, chooses Spirit-filled servants, keeps prayer and God's Word central, and produces believers whose faithfulness remains strong even under false accusation and opposition.

Acts 6 in One Sentence

As growth creates a challenge within the Jerusalem church, the apostles wisely appoint seven Spirit-filled servants so prayer and the Word remain central, allowing the gospel to spread rapidly while Stephen emerges as a powerful, wise, and courageous witness for Jesus Christ.