

The Church in the New Testament, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: Service and Leadership

Acts 6:1-7

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The first two lessons showed the class a church that was born in power and held together under threat. This lesson shows them what nearly pulled it apart, and the answer will surprise them. It was not the Sanhedrin. It was a food line. Set the scene plainly: the church is growing fast, it is caring for widows daily, and the Hellenistic widows (Greek-speaking Jews, likely newcomers, probably without local family) are being overlooked. Luke does not say the complaint was unfounded. He records it as real. Help the class feel how ordinary this is, because most congregations are not wrecked by persecution. They are worn down by neglect that nobody meant.

The heart of the lesson is how the apostles responded, and there are three moves worth slowing down for. First, they took the complaint seriously instead of managing it or minimizing it. Second, they refused to solve it by doing everything themselves, which is the instinct of every conscientious leader and the ruin of many. Third, they put the choosing in the hands of the congregation while retaining the appointing for themselves. That is a careful division, and it is worth naming: the church selected, the apostles installed. You will want the class to see God-given order here rather than a business decision about efficiency.

Be ready for two questions the class will bring. Someone will ask whether the seven are deacons, and the honest answer is that Luke never uses the title here; he uses the verb, they were serving. The office of deacon does come into focus later (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13), and the work here plainly looks like it, so teach the connection without overclaiming what the text does not say. Someone else may hear verse 2 as ranking preaching above service, which is exactly backward. The apostles were not protecting their dignity; they were protecting an assignment. Then let verse 7 land. The word of God increased, the disciples multiplied, and even priests were obeying the faith. Shared, orderly service did not distract the church from its mission. It is the reason the mission moved.

Question 1

Student Question:

In verse 1, a complaint arises because the Hellenistic widows were being neglected. What does this tell us about the kinds of problems that can arise even in a growing, faithful church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Start by letting the class feel the timing. Luke says this happened “in these days when the disciples were increasing in number.” The trouble did not come in spite of the growth. It came because of it. The very success of the church created a situation the church had outgrown, and that is worth naming out loud, because congregations often assume that if things are going well, problems mean something has gone wrong. Sometimes a problem is just evidence that God has given you more than your old arrangements can carry.

Notice next that the complaint was legitimate. Luke does not call it grumbling in the sense of Israel in the wilderness, and he never suggests the Hellenists were being petty. He reports the neglect as a fact: their widows “were being overlooked in the daily distribution.” Help your class sit with that word, overlooked. Nobody in Acts 4 decided to mistreat these women. They were simply not seen. This is how most harm happens in a good church, not by malice but by a blind spot that no one has any reason to notice, unless the person in it says something.

Point out the fault line the complaint runs along. Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews; Hebrews were Aramaic-speaking, local, connected. The neglect fell precisely where the cultural seam was, on the people who were newest, least connected, and least likely to be missed. Ask your class where that seam runs in their own congregation. Every church has one, and it is almost always invisible to the people on the comfortable side of it.

Then draw the lesson gently. A church can be faithful, unified, generous, and growing, and still have someone falling through. Acts 4 said there was not a needy person among them, and Acts 6 says a group of widows was going hungry, and both are true reports of the same congregation. Perfection was never the promise. Attentiveness is the command, and the health of this church is proved not by the absence of the problem but by what they did the moment they heard about it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Growth creates real problems; trouble in a congregation is not automatic evidence of unfaithfulness (Acts 6:1)
- The complaint was legitimate, and Luke records it as a genuine neglect rather than mere grumbling
- Harm in a good church usually comes from blind spots, not from malice
- Neglect tends to fall on the newest and least connected, along cultural or social seams
- The care of widows is a genuine obligation of God’s people, not optional benevolence (James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:3-16)
- A congregation’s health is measured by how it responds when a problem surfaces

Discussion Prompts

- Where is the seam in our congregation, the place where someone could quietly be overlooked?
- Have you ever been the person nobody meant to neglect? What would have helped?

- Why is it hard for a growing, healthy church to believe it has a problem?

Question 2

Student Question:

Why was this particular problem—neglecting the care of widows—so serious that it required immediate attention from the apostles?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Help the class understand who a widow was in that world. She had no wage, no inheritance in her own right, and no social standing apart from a husband or son. If the community did not feed her, she did not eat. This was not a matter of hurt feelings over an oversight. Women were going hungry. The urgency in Acts 6 is not about church politics; it is about the fact that the most defenseless people in the congregation were the ones being missed.

Then show the class that God has always watched this particular issue with unusual attention. The Law commanded Israel to care for the widow and the fatherless and warned that God Himself would hear their cry (Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 10:18). The prophets measured the nation by it (Isaiah 1:17). James defines pure religion by visiting orphans and widows in their affliction (James 1:27), and Paul gives Timothy an entire section of instruction on how the church is to handle it (1 Timothy 5:3-16). This is not a minor benevolence item in Scripture. It is one of the places God has told us He is watching.

Now connect it back to the previous lesson, because the class just studied Acts 4. That chapter's proudest claim was that "there was not a needy person among them." If the Hellenistic widows go hungry, that claim collapses, and with it the credibility of everything the church was preaching. A congregation that testifies to a Lord who cares for the least and then cannot feed its own widows has contradicted its message in the most public way possible. The apostles were not protecting a program. They were protecting the gospel's witness.

There is a unity issue here too, and it is worth naming. The neglect fell entirely on one group, along a cultural line. Left alone, that does not stay a food problem for long; it becomes a Hebrew church and a Hellenist church. Satan could not stop this congregation from the outside in Acts 4, and here he is trying a quieter door. Help the class see that the apostles moved fast because they recognized what was actually at stake.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Widows in that culture had no means of support; this was a matter of survival, not sentiment
- God has always given particular attention to the care of widows and the fatherless (Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 10:18; Isaiah 1:17)
- Pure religion is defined in part by care for widows and orphans (James 1:27)

- The church has specific responsibility for its widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16)
- Neglect here would have contradicted the church's own testimony in Acts 4:34
- Neglect falling along a cultural line threatens to divide one congregation into two

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Scripture returns so often to the treatment of widows and orphans?
- What would an outsider conclude about our gospel from the way we care for our most vulnerable members?
- How does a practical problem, left unaddressed, become a unity problem?

Question 3

Student Question:

In verse 2, the apostles say it is “not right” for them to “give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.” Does this mean practical service is less important than preaching? What is the apostles’ point?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Address the misreading head on, because the verse invites it. On a quick read the apostles sound like men protecting their status: let someone else handle the food, we have important work. That is precisely what they are not saying, and the passage disproves it in three ways. Watch them all with the class.

First, look at what they did with the problem. If the apostles thought table service was beneath them, the simplest move was to let it slide. Instead they stopped everything, convened the whole congregation, and made it the church's urgent business. You do not do that with something you consider unimportant. Second, look at who they required. Men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. Nobody staffs a menial job with the most spiritually qualified men available. The standard tells you how seriously they took the work. Third, look at what happened to two of them. Stephen and Philip walk out of this table-serving list into the most powerful preaching and evangelism in the book.

So what is the apostles' point? It is not rank; it is assignment. The phrase is “it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God.” They had been given a specific charge by the Lord Himself, and no one else on earth could do it. They were the eyewitnesses; the revelation came through them. For them to leave that in order to distribute food would not have been humility. It would have been abandoning a post. Help the class see that a man can fail God just as surely by doing a good thing that was never his to do.

Draw out the principle for the class, because it reaches all of them. Faithfulness means doing your work, not all the work. The problem in this passage was never that serving tables was too lowly. It was that twelve men were trying to do everything, and the result was that both jobs

were suffering. God's answer to an overloaded leader is not a harder-working leader. It is a body with more than twelve members in it.

Then be honest about where this bites today. Congregations do quietly rank their work, and the ranking usually shows up in who gets thanked. The New Testament will not have it. The same God who assigned Peter to preach assigned these seven to the food, called it being "full of the Spirit," and made sure their names were written in Scripture forever.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The apostles' point is assignment, not rank; practical service is not inferior work (Acts 6:2)
- The seriousness with which they treated the problem shows they valued the service highly
- The high qualifications required for the seven prove the work was not considered menial
- The apostles had a unique, unrepeatable charge as eyewitnesses through whom revelation came
- A Christian can fail by taking on good work that God never assigned him
- God's remedy for overloaded leaders is a functioning body, not harder-working leaders (1 Corinthians 12:14-20)

Discussion Prompts

- What good work are you doing that was never actually yours to do?
- How do congregations quietly rank their work, and where does that ranking show up?
- Why is "doing everything myself" a failure of leadership rather than a form of dedication?

Question 4

Student Question:

The apostles instruct the congregation to choose the seven men (v. 3). What does this tell us about the role of the congregation in selecting those who serve?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Have the class notice exactly how the work is divided, because Luke is precise about it. The apostles say, "Pick out from among you seven men... whom we will appoint to this duty." The congregation selects. The apostles appoint. Neither party does the other's job. The apostles had every right to hand down a list of names, and they did not. The congregation had no authority to install men on its own, and it did not. Two responsibilities, kept distinct, working together.

Ask the class why the choosing belonged to the congregation, and let them reason it out. These were the people who knew the men. Reputation is not something an apostle can assess from a distance; it is what the brethren have watched over years. And these were the people who had to trust the outcome. The complaint had come from the Hellenists, and the congregation chose seven men with Greek names, which is a quiet detail worth pointing out. The very group that

had been overlooked was given the men they trusted. That is how you heal a neglect rather than merely fix a logistics problem.

Draw out the principle of order. The New Testament shows congregations participating in decisions that concern them, and it also shows appointment being made by those with the authority to make it. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23), and Titus was left in Crete to appoint elders in every town (Titus 1:5), while the qualifications are published in Scripture so the whole congregation can know them and recognize them (1 Timothy 3:1-13). This is not congregational democracy, where the majority decides what is true or who may serve regardless of God's standards. It is a body that knows its own people, working under the order God gave.

Note also that the apostles set the qualifications before the congregation chose. That order matters. The church was not free to pick whomever it liked; it was free to identify who met the standard God had given. Help the class see the difference. We do not vote men into service on popularity, family name, or willingness. We recognize the men Scripture has already described.

Bring it near. If selecting servants belongs to the congregation, then knowing one another is not optional. A church that does not know its people cannot do what Acts 6 asks of it. Ask the class whether they could name the qualifications, and whether they know the members well enough to recognize them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The congregation selected and the apostles appointed; the responsibilities were distinct and both were necessary (Acts 6:3)
- The brethren choose because reputation is known by those who have watched a man over time
- The seven chosen bore Greek names, meaning the neglected group was given men it trusted
- Appointment in the New Testament is made by those with authority to appoint (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)
- This is not democracy; God sets the qualifications, and the congregation recognizes who meets them (1 Timothy 3:1-13)
- A congregation must know its members well enough to identify qualified servants

Discussion Prompts

- Could you name the qualifications Scripture gives for those who serve? Do we know our members well enough to recognize them?
- Why does it matter that the overlooked group was given men they trusted?
- What is the difference between recognizing men God has qualified and voting for the men we like?

Question 5

Student Question:

What qualifications did the apostles require for these men: "good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (v. 3)? Why were these qualities necessary even for practical service?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Take the three in order and let the class feel the weight of each. "Of good repute" means attested, well spoken of, men whose lives have already been observed and have held up. Notice that this is not self-reported. A man cannot supply his own good reputation; it is given to him by the people who have watched him. "Full of the Spirit" describes men whose lives were evidently governed by God rather than by self. "Of wisdom" means practical, skillful judgment, the ability to handle a delicate situation without making it worse.

Now put those qualifications back next to the job, because that is where the lesson is. This was food distribution. Yet the apostles asked for character that most congregations would consider more than sufficient for the pulpit. Ask the class why, and let them work it out before you answer. The reason is that the job was not really about food. It was about a wounded group, a cultural fault line, and a congregation's trust. Handing that to a merely willing man would have been reckless. It takes wisdom to distribute bread fairly to people who already believe they have been slighted, and it takes reputation for them to accept the result.

Draw the principle out plainly: in the church there is no such thing as a task so practical that character does not matter. We tend to assume that spiritual qualifications belong to spiritual work and that practical work only needs a volunteer. Acts 6 flatly disagrees. The seven were handling money and food and the dignity of vulnerable women, and that required men full of the Spirit. Anyone who has watched a congregation hurt by a well-meaning but foolish servant knows exactly why.

Be careful not to let "full of the Spirit" drift. The class may hear it as a special anointing or a second blessing that marks off a spiritual elite. Read it the way Luke uses it. He says the same of Barnabas, that he was "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24), and the fruit of it is character: goodness, faith, wisdom. This describes a man in whom the Spirit's work is unmistakable, producing the fruit of Galatians 5:22-23, not a man with an experience others lack.

Then let it press on the class personally. These qualifications were not achieved in the moment they were needed. Stephen was full of the Spirit and wisdom before anyone asked him to do anything, which is why he was available when the church needed him. Ask your class what they are becoming while no one is watching, because that is the only thing that can be recognized later.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Good repute is attested by others over time; a man cannot supply his own reputation (Acts 6:3)
- “Full of the Spirit” describes a life evidently governed by God, shown in fruit and character (Acts 11:24; Galatians 5:22-23)
- It is not a second blessing or a mark of a spiritual elite
- Wisdom is practical, skillful judgment, needed most where situations are delicate
- No task in the church is so practical that character does not matter
- Qualifications are formed before they are needed, in seasons when no one is watching

Discussion Prompts

- Why would food distribution require men of this caliber? What does that say about “practical” work?
- Reputation is given by others, not claimed. What are you building while no one is watching?
- How would you explain “full of the Spirit” to someone who thinks it means a special experience?

Question 6

Student Question:

In verse 4, the apostles say they will devote themselves to “prayer and the ministry of the word.” What does this teach about the priorities of spiritual leadership?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Point first at the verb, because the class met it two lessons ago. “We will devote ourselves” is the same word Luke used in Acts 2:42 of the whole church devoting itself to the apostles’ teaching and the prayers. It means to hold fast, to persist, to keep at a thing steadily. The apostles are not announcing a preference. They are describing a commitment they intend to guard, and the entire reorganization of Acts 6 exists so that they can keep it.

Notice the order and the pairing. Prayer comes first, and the word comes second, and they are joined. That combination is the whole job. A leader who studies but does not pray is handling God’s word as a subject to master rather than a God to depend on. A leader who prays but does not labor in the word has nothing to feed anyone. Help the class see that these two are not the leader’s private devotional life; they are his work. The apostles are describing what they will be doing all day.

Then draw out the uncomfortable implication. Both prayer and the ministry of the word are almost infinitely postponable. Nobody notices immediately if an elder stops praying or a preacher coasts on old study. The food line, by contrast, announces itself the moment it fails. Urgent work will always crowd out important work unless someone protects the important work on purpose, and that protection is exactly what the seven made possible. This is why the

reorganization was not administrative housekeeping. It was how the apostles kept their assignment.

Keep the class from misapplying this. This is not a text for a preacher who wants to avoid people, and it is not a warrant for elders to be unavailable. Paul, who labored in the word as hard as any man, also taught publicly and from house to house and worked with his own hands (Acts 20:20, 34). The point is not distance from the flock. It is that the leaders must not be so consumed with what is urgent that the church starves for what is essential.

Bring it to the class in a way that includes them. If the apostles could only devote themselves to prayer and the word because seven other men took up the tables, then a congregation gets the leadership it makes possible. Ask the class what they are freeing their leaders to do, or preventing them from doing.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “Devote” is the same word used of the church’s devotion in Acts 2:42; it means steady, persistent commitment
- Prayer and the ministry of the word are the leader’s work, not merely his private devotion (Acts 6:4)
- The two belong together; study without prayer is mastery without dependence, prayer without the word has nothing to feed
- Urgent work always crowds out essential work unless it is protected deliberately
- This is no warrant for leaders to be distant from the flock (Acts 20:20, 34)
- A congregation largely determines what its leaders are free to do

Discussion Prompts

- What urgent things are crowding out the essential things in your own walk with God?
- What are you doing that frees our leaders to pray and labor in the word? What might be preventing it?
- Why do prayer and the ministry of the word have to be protected on purpose?

Question 7

Student Question:

Verse 5 names the seven men chosen, including Stephen and Philip. What do we learn later about these men, and what does their example teach about the connection between service and spiritual growth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Let the class follow these two men out of the chapter, because Luke clearly wants us to. Stephen, described here as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit,” is preaching within a few

verses, disputing with the synagogue, and delivering the longest sermon recorded in Acts before becoming the church's first martyr, praying for the men who killed him (Acts 7:59-60). Philip goes to Samaria and preaches Christ to a city, then to a desert road and an Ethiopian, and is still called "Philip the evangelist, one of the seven" decades later (Acts 21:8). The class will study him in the very next lesson.

Ask the class to notice what did not happen. Neither man was promoted out of table service into real ministry. Luke does not present the food as a training program they graduated from. He presents these as men who were already full of the Spirit and wisdom, who were handed a genuine need, and who kept being faithful as God widened the work. The service did not qualify them; their character qualified them for the service, and the same character carried them into everything after.

Draw the principle carefully, because the class may reach for a wrong version of it. The lesson is not "serve tables and God will promote you to something better." That still assumes preaching outranks food, which the chapter has already denied. The lesson is that God gives more to those who are faithful with what is in front of them (Luke 16:10), and that faithfulness is a settled disposition rather than a job title. Stephen serving bread and Stephen answering the Sanhedrin are the same man doing the same thing.

Then put the encouragement where the class needs it. Most people in your class are not going to preach the longest sermon in Acts. They are going to do something that looks a great deal more like distributing food. This passage tells them that the men Scripture honored by name were doing exactly that, and that God was not waiting for them to get to something more important. Ask the class what they would do differently if they believed their ordinary service was the real work rather than the waiting room for it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Stephen became the first martyr and a powerful preacher; Philip became an evangelist (Acts 7:59-60; 8:5; 21:8)
- Their character qualified them for the service; the service did not qualify them
- Luke does not present table service as a stepping stone to more important work
- Faithfulness in what is at hand is how God entrusts more (Luke 16:10)
- Faithfulness is a disposition, not a position; the same man serves bread and answers the Sanhedrin
- Ordinary service is real work, not a waiting room for real work

Discussion Prompts

- What would change if you believed your ordinary service was the real work rather than a step toward it?
- Why is "serve well and God will promote you" a misreading of this passage?

- Stephen was already full of faith and the Spirit before he was chosen. How is that kind of readiness built?

Question 8

Student Question:

Verse 6 describes the apostles praying and laying hands on the seven. What is the significance of this public act of appointment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with what the act meant, which is simpler than the class may expect. Laying on of hands in Scripture regularly marks a public identification and commissioning: this person, for this work, with our blessing and God's. Moses laid hands on Joshua and set him before the congregation (Numbers 27:18-23). The church at Antioch would do the same for Barnabas and Saul before sending them out, after fasting and prayer (Acts 13:3), which the class will study in Lesson 6. The gesture says, publicly and visibly, that the church stands behind these men in this task.

Notice that prayer comes with it, and comes first. The church had chosen the seven, but the church did not think it had thereby produced them. They prayed. Help the class see the humility in that. A congregation can identify a qualified man, but it cannot make him faithful, and it cannot make his work fruitful. The prayer confesses where the sufficiency has to come from.

Draw out why the public nature matters so much here. Remember the wound: one group believed it had been overlooked. A private arrangement would not have healed that. The congregation needed to see these men set apart for this work in the open, and the seven needed the whole church to know what they had been given to do. Public appointment protects everyone. It tells the servants what they are responsible for, and it tells the congregation whom to trust and where to go.

Now set a boundary the class needs. Do not let anyone read this as a sacrament that conveys grace or an ordination that creates a clergy class. The hands did not make these men holy; the church had already recognized them as full of the Spirit and wisdom. And be careful with a related question that will surface: in this era the apostles' hands did convey miraculous gifts (Acts 8:17-18; Romans 1:11), which is a distinct matter tied to the apostolic age and not what verse 6 is describing. Here it is appointment and blessing.

Then bring the principle home. God does His work through recognized people in the open, not through vague good intentions. Ask the class what work in their congregation nobody is clearly responsible for. Whatever it is, that is usually the thing quietly being overlooked, just like the widows.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Laying on of hands here marks public identification and commissioning for a work (Numbers 27:18-23; Acts 13:3)
- Prayer accompanied the act; the church recognized men but did not presume to supply their sufficiency
- Public appointment was necessary to heal a public wound and to establish clear responsibility
- This is not a sacrament conveying grace, and it does not create a clergy class
- The apostolic conveying of miraculous gifts by hands is a separate matter belonging to that age (Acts 8:17-18)
- Work that no one is clearly responsible for is the work most likely to be neglected

Discussion Prompts

- What work in our congregation is nobody clearly responsible for?
- Why did this appointment need to happen publicly rather than privately?
- The church chose the men and then prayed over them. What does that prayer confess?

Question 9

Student Question:

According to verse 7, the result of this decision was that “the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly.” How does wise organization and shared service contribute to the growth of the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Have the class read verse 7 immediately after verse 1 and feel the distance traveled. The chapter opens with a complaint and closes with multiplication. Luke deliberately links them with “and,” presenting the growth as what followed the church’s handling of the problem. Notice his phrasing: “the word of God continued to increase.” Luke measures growth by the word spreading, and the numbers follow from that. He is not reporting an attendance surge; he is reporting that the message got out.

Ask the class to trace the mechanism, because it is not mystical. Twelve men had been trying to do everything, and both jobs were suffering. After Acts 6, the widows are fed and the apostles are free to preach, and the church has seven more men openly at work. Nothing was added except order. The same congregation, rightly arranged, could suddenly do far more than it had been doing. That is what organization is for, and it is why organization is a spiritual matter rather than a merely practical one.

Do not let the class draw the wrong conclusion, though, and this is worth saying plainly. Organization does not grow a church. God does (1 Corinthians 3:6-7), and He does it through the word. What good order does is remove the obstacles that keep the word from moving and keep the body from working. A congregation can be beautifully organized and dead. The point of Acts

6 is not that structure produces life. It is that disorder was choking the life that was already there.

Draw out the detail Luke adds at the end, because it is stunning and the class may skim it: “and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” Priests. The men whose livelihood and identity were bound to the temple system, converting in numbers. That is what was happening while the church sorted out its food distribution. Help the class see that the internal work of Acts 6 and the external reach of the gospel were not competing for the church’s attention. One made room for the other.

Then land it on them. The unity restored in this chapter was itself part of the witness, exactly as Lesson 2 showed. A church that visibly refuses to let anyone go overlooked is preaching while it eats. Ask the class what our own housekeeping is currently saying to the people watching us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Luke measures growth by the increase of the word; numbers follow the message (Acts 6:7)
- Order removes obstacles to the word and frees the body to work
- Organization does not produce growth; God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-7)
- A congregation can be well organized and spiritually dead; structure serves life, it does not create it
- Even priests obeyed the faith, showing the gospel’s reach while the church attended to internal matters
- Restored unity is itself part of the church’s witness

Discussion Prompts

- What is our congregation’s “housekeeping” currently saying to the people watching us?
- Why is organization a spiritual matter and not merely a practical one?
- How do we keep good order from becoming an end in itself?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking at Acts 6:1-7 as a whole, what principles of service, leadership, and problem-solving does this passage establish for the church today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Let the class build the list themselves, because they have every piece now. Walk back through the chapter and write it up: a real problem was named, not buried. The leaders took it seriously without taking it over. The whole congregation was brought in. Qualifications were set by God’s standard before anyone was chosen. Those who knew the men did the choosing. Those with authority did the appointing. The work was assigned publicly and prayed over. And the result

was that the word increased. That is a complete method for handling trouble in a congregation, drawn from a food dispute.

Point out what is most striking about the whole account: how unremarkable it looks. There is no miracle here. No angel, no shaking building, no vision. The Spirit-filled response to this crisis was to think clearly, distribute responsibility, and honor God's order. Help the class see that most of what God asks of a congregation looks exactly like this. We often wait for something dramatic while the actual work of the church is sitting in front of us needing wisdom and courage.

Draw out the pattern the class should carry. The New Testament shows congregations under the order God gave: qualified men appointed to specific work, the whole body participating, the word and prayer protected as the first priority of leadership. We are not free to invent structures that suit our preferences, and we do not need to. Acts 6 was not solving a first-century problem in a first-century way. It was showing the church how a body works.

Keep them from romanticizing it. The seven were appointed, and Stephen was dead within two chapters. The problem was solved, and Acts is full of more problems after it. Faithful order does not purchase a trouble-free congregation. It gives a congregation a way to meet trouble without being destroyed by it, which is a far better and more realistic promise.

End with the mirror, where this lesson has been aimed all along. Two questions, and let them sit. When something is wrong among us, do we name it or manage it? And are you doing the work that is actually yours, or waiting for work that feels more important than serving tables?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Problems should be named and addressed, not buried or minimized (Acts 6:1-2)
- Leaders take responsibility without absorbing every task themselves
- God sets the qualifications; the congregation recognizes and selects; those with authority appoint (Acts 6:3, 6)
- Prayer and the ministry of the word are the protected first priority of spiritual leadership (Acts 6:4)
- The Spirit-filled response to this crisis was clear thinking and godly order, not a miracle
- The New Testament pattern of order is to be restored, not redesigned to suit preference
- Faithful order does not prevent trouble; it equips a church to meet trouble without being destroyed

Discussion Prompts

- When something is wrong among us, do we name it or manage it? What makes the difference?
- Are you doing the work that is actually yours, or waiting for work that feels more important?
- Which principle from this chapter does our congregation most need to recover?