

# Acts 6

In the west we are so used to church shrinkage not growth, but when the church does grow, it normally goes through a period of struggle as it has to adapt to larger numbers. The senior leadership cannot know everyone and they cannot be involved in every decision and every practicality. Other layers of leadership and practical management have to be devised in order to keep things going in a helpful and fruitful way. What happens in practice is that things tend to come to a head over a particular problem, that if not resolved could lead to division or people turning away from the Christian Church altogether.

Today's chapter is one of those moments when practical difficulties could have split the church or could have stopped the apostles from doing their job which was primarily to preach and teach the faith. The issue was about different people and the unfairness of food distribution based on language/ethnic differences. Sounds terribly modern does it not?

In the process of the problem's resolution, we are introduced to Stephen who is going to be the major person in the next chapter and via him we get to be introduced to Saul who became Paul. Luke is clearly shaping his material, steering us through the important events but in such a way that leads us to Paul and his ministry and work. It important to note in this the importance of the selection of this new layer of leadership and who else was included.

## Read Acts 6.1-4

What in essence is the problem?

How did this come about?

What did the apostles do about it?

What did the apostles not do?

What selection criteria was used to pick these new people?

What would the criteria likely to be for such a job today? Have we got something wrong?

How many of the seven did the apostles choose?

## Read Acts 6.5-7

How did this suggestion go down with the church?

Who did they choose and what can we say about them?

What did the apostles then do and why is this so important?

What was the effect of this on the church?

What might the significance be of the reference to large numbers of priests?

What can we learn about the sharing of ministry in this way and what are we doing about it?

## Read Acts 6.8-15

Is v. 8 a big surprise as this is not what Stephen was appointed for?

Where does opposition arise from - and why there?

Why were they not successful?

What did the opposition then do and how does this compare to Jesus himself?

What is the truth and what is the lie in what they say?

Why were the Jewish leaders so upset?

What does v.15 tell us about Stephen?

## General question:

What is a disciple?

Reflect on how difficulty was resolved and how we can learn from that.