

ACTS: THE STORY CONTINUES

ACTS 6:1–7

“A CHURCH GROWING INTO MATURITY”

OPENING THOUGHT

As we come to Acts 6, we are arriving at a major turning point in the Book of Acts.

Up until now, much of the focus has been on:

- The Apostles
- Peter’s preaching
- Signs and Wonders
- The explosive birth of the church in Jerusalem

But now the church is growing rapidly, and with growth comes pressure.

Acts 6 is not simply about solving a practical problem... it is about the church beginning to mature.

The ministry of Christ is beginning to spread outward through the body itself.

This chapter also prepares us for one of the most important figures in Acts outside of the apostles themselves: Stephen.

Stephen is introduced as one of the seven chosen to help care for the needs of the body, yet we soon discover that he is also:

- Full of the Spirit
- Grounded in Scripture
- Powerful in wisdom
- Bold in witness
- Prepared to stand for Christ under intense opposition

Stephen reminds us that the goal of discipleship is not merely knowledge, but maturity: growing into faithful servants and witnesses of Christ.

READ ACTS 6:1–7

“Now in these days, when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”

PART 1: GROWTH CREATED NEW PRESSURES

Acts 6:1

“Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number...”

Question:

- What problem arises in the church as the number of disciples increases?

Question:

- Why do you think Luke intentionally tells us that this problem arose during a season of growth?

Question:

- What does this teach us about the reality of church life, even in the early church?

Discussion Thought:

Sometimes people imagine that a healthy church would have no tensions, no misunderstandings, and no challenges.

But Acts shows us something very different.

The early church was:

- Spirit-filled

- powerful
- growing
- and still made up of imperfect people learning how to live together as the body of Christ.

PART 2 — THE APOSTLES PROTECTED THEIR PRIMARY CALLING

Acts 6:2–4

“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.”

Question:

- Were the apostles saying that caring for widows was unimportant? Why or why not?

Question:

- According to verse 4, what did the apostles believe they needed to remain devoted to?

Question:

- Why is prayer and the ministry of the Word so essential to the life and health of the church?

Discussion Thought:

The apostles understood that the church needed both:

- practical care
- spiritual nourishment

The solution was not:

“Ignore the widows.”

But neither was it:

“Abandon prayer and the Word.”

The church needed mature believers who could step into the work of ministry so that the body could function properly.

PART 3 — THE BODY BEGINS TO MATURE

Acts 6:3

“Pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom...”

Question:

- What qualities were the apostles looking for in these men?

Question:

- What stands out to you about these qualifications?

Question:

- Why do you think spiritual maturity mattered even for this practical area of ministry?

Discussion Thought:

These men were not chosen merely because they were available.

They were spiritually formed men:

- Trustworthy
- Wise
- Spirit-filled
- Grounded in faith

Acts 6 begins showing us a major theme:

The church was never meant to function as a small group of leaders doing everything while everyone else watches.

The body of Christ matures as disciples grow into participation in the life and mission of the church.

PART 4 — STEPHEN: MORE THAN A TABLE SERVANT

Acts 6:5

“And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit...”

Question:

- What does Luke emphasize about Stephen immediately?

Question:

- Why do you think Luke introduces Stephen this way before telling us his story?

Discussion Thought:

Stephen was chosen to help serve widows.

Yet in the verses that follow, and especially in chapter 7, we discover that Stephen was also:

- Deeply grounded in Scripture
- Able to teach
- Able to defend the faith
- Spiritually courageous
- Prepared to stand before opposition

Stephen had clearly been discipled.

- He had learned the apostles' teaching.
- He had grown in spiritual maturity.
- He had become equipped for ministry.

And when the moment came, he was ready.

PART 5 — DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY**Ephesians 4:11–13**

“...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

Question:

- According to this passage, who is called to participate in the work of ministry?

Question:

- What is the difference between attending church and growing into spiritual maturity?

Question:

- Why is discipleship essential if believers are going to become mature servants and witnesses of Christ?

Discussion Thought:

The goal of the Christian life is not merely:

- attending services
- accumulating information
- remaining spiritually dependent forever

The goal is maturity in Christ.

Acts 6 shows us a church beginning to grow beyond infancy.

The ministry of Christ begins spreading outward through mature disciples who are prepared to serve, love, teach, witness, and stand firm in truth.

PART 6 — PREPARING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Acts 6:7

“And the word of God continued to increase...”

Question:

- What was the result of the church responding wisely to this situation?

Question:

- How does healthy participation within the body help strengthen the mission of the church?

Discussion Thought:

Acts 6 prepares us for what is about to happen next.

Very soon:

- persecution will intensify
- Stephen will boldly proclaim Christ
- the church will begin scattering outward
- the gospel will move beyond Jerusalem

And here’s something to think about... one of the central figures in this next movement is not one of the apostles...

It is Stephen: a mature, Spirit-filled disciple raised up from within the body itself.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Acts 6 reminds us that the church is not meant to remain spiritually immature.

Christ forms His people through:

- The Word
- Prayer
- Discipleship
- Participation in the life of the body

And as believers mature, the ministry of Christ begins multiplying outward through His people.

The story continues not merely through apostles and pastors, but through ordinary believers who are being formed into faithful servants and witnesses of Jesus Christ.