

“Serving” - Acts 6:1-15

Ask - “What are some ways you have served or volunteered both in and outside the church?”

Background - Despite the heavy persecution of the early church and its leaders, by God’s grace it continued to grow and thrive. But with growth comes new challenges and responsibilities. More godly and righteous servants are needed to meet the increased workload.

“A Complaint Arises” - Acts 6:1-4

(v1) Describe the conflict that is presented in this verse. Who was complaining and why? What ministry of the early church is being addressed?

(v2-3) What did the apostles do in order to address this issue? What did they suggest? What was their reason for making this suggestion?

(v4) What did the apostles say that their fundamental responsibilities were? How have many churches diluted and lost focus on this truth?

COMPLAINTS AROSE THAT SOME OF THE WIDOWS WERE BEING LEFT OUT, SO THE APOSTLES SUGGESTED THAT MEN BE APPOINTED TO ADDRESS THIS CONCERN. THEIR ROLE AS LEADERS WERE TO ADDRESS THE CONGREGATION’S SPIRITUAL NEEDS THROUGH THE WORD AND PRAYER, NOT TO BE BOGGED DOWN BY PHYSICAL NEEDS.

“The Solution Works” - Acts 6:5-7

(v5-6) What were the names of the 7 men they chose to address this and other such issues (ie, the first deacons)? Who chose them and in what manner were they officially ordained?

(v7) Based on this verse, did this strategy turn out? Describe the state of the church in Jerusalem at this time. How were the priests responding to it?

THE WHOLE CONGREGATION SELECTED AND ORDAINED DEACONS TO SERVE AND CONDUCT THE “SOCIAL” MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH. THE CHURCH CONTINUED TO PROSPER.

“Stephen Draws Scrutiny” - Acts 6:8-15

(v8-9) Who was Stephen and how is he described (see also verse 5)? What was he doing? Who rose up against and argued with him?

(v10-11) Were these critics successful in confounding Stephen? When they

failed, what then did they do?

(v12-14) Where did the people take Stephen? What did the false witnesses charge him with? Compare this with Matthew 26:59-63.

(v15) How did Stephen appear to those on the Council?

STEPHEN, A GODLY DEACON, WAS GAINING PROMINENCE AMONG THE PEOPLE, SO HIS ADVERSARIES FALSELY ACCUSED HIM AND HAD HIM BROUGHT BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

Application - We as Christians are called to serve one another, especially those within the house of God. The early church was doing just that by providing for its widows, and appointing the first deacons to help address this concern as the church grew. Beloved, all of us are called to serve, to contribute, and to participate in the work of the church. This is not all on the pastor(s) or the paid staff. In fact, while certainly not exempt from such tasks, they should be freed by a serving congregation to focus primarily on the spiritual needs of the church through the ministry of the word and prayer. What stands out to you in today's lesson?