

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 14TH–15TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

ORGANIZATION (ACTS 6:1–2) PEOPLE BEING PEOPLE

As the church grew, it also started to evolve because people tend to form groups. There were two groups of Jews that agreed on major theology but viewed culture very differently.

- Hellenistic Jews adopted Greek culture, language, and customs. Hebraic Jews strongly held onto traditional Jewish customs.

THERE WAS A PROBLEM OF PREJUDICE

Many Hellenistic Jews had moved out of Israel, and they complained that they—specifically their widows—were being mistreated because they were not “pure” enough.

- Prejudice grows when we don't view people like Jesus does. We must be wise, but **minor differences shouldn't create major divisions.**

IT MAY NOT HAVE EVEN BEEN CONSCIOUS

The word “overlooked” indicates that the Hebraic Jews were not consciously trying to be negligent.

- Not only should we be **intentional with how we view and interact with people**, but we should also **be gracious and address issues in a way that honors God.**

ORGANIZED RELIGION?

After hearing about the conflict, the 12 disciples gathered the church and started to devise a plan to resolve the community service issue.

- Many criticize “organized religion,” but **God is a God of order** (1 Corinthians 14), and we are **called to be efficient, benevolent, and transparent so we represent Him well.**

DIFFERENT ROLES AIMING AT THE SAME GOAL

The disciples didn't think they were better than the others, but they knew it didn't make sense for anyone else to be the teachers.

- **Teaching the Word is the Church's most imperative function, but there are many talents and ways we minister to the community to demonstrate the Word.**

QUALIFICATIONS (ACTS 6:3–7)

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH

Jewish courts were made up of seven people. Men were chosen because it was culturally acceptable, but **Christianity would greatly elevate the influence of women in society.**

- This is the beginning of **deacons**—people of high moral character who **take care of practical and supporting ministry needs.**

TITLES AND ROLES

We shouldn't overemphasize titles or pass them out flippantly. The first generation of deacons had to be **full of the Holy Spirit, have good reputations, and demonstrate wisdom.**

- We consider our Life Group leaders to fill the deacon role. This is why we **carefully vet people in leadership roles.**

“SEVEN MEN OF GOOD REPUTATION”

The church chose seven men and had them “stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.”

- Laying hands was associated with healing, protection, and commissioning/blessing. It is also an act of authority done by righteous people/leaders.

INTENTIONALITY AND EXCELLENCE YIELD RESULTS

The church **saw a need, sought godly council, identified righteous servants, had a plan, and prayed for God's blessing on it.**

- The result of an organized, holy church was this: **“the Word of God spread, the disciples ... increased greatly...and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.”**

NOTICE THE PRACTICAL BALANCE

We learn from these passages **to live in close connection to Jesus, be proactive in identifying problems, use godly council to resolve problems, and remain in prayer throughout the process.**

- **We worship and function in Spirit and Truth or in mind and heart** (John 4).

GOOD AND EVIL (ACTS 6:8–15)

STEPHEN

Stephen was a Hellenistic Jew. He was a “man full of faith and the Holy Spirit,” and also “full of grace and power,” through whom God performed “great wonders and signs.”

- Stephen was in his late 20s when chosen as a deacon, and though we know little about him, he has become a pivotal saint.

OPPOSITION

Immediately after Stephen was chosen, his own group, the Hellenists, started to falsely accuse him of blasphemy. Ironically, the group that experienced prejudice earlier became the ones treating others unfairly.

- Just a subtle reminder that **we can all be divisive and evil if we're not on guard.**

“THEY STIRRED UP THE PEOPLE”

“They were unable to stand up against [Stephen's] wisdom and the Spirit by whom he was speaking,” so they took **the cowardly and evil road of gossip, slander, and division.**

- The Ninth Commandment is to **“not bear false witness”**: lying, gossiping, or slandering to hurt someone's reputation (Exodus 20:16, NKJV).

THIS SOUNDS FAMILIAR (MATTHEW 26 AND MARK 14)

The accusation that Stephen was teaching about Jesus destroying the temple and changing Jewish law sounds like the accusations against Jesus, but Jesus never threatened the temple, and He affirmed the Law of Moses.

- **Emotionalism and mob mentality often overshadow truth.**
“HIS FACE WAS LIKE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL”

Yet again, the Sanhedrin stands in judgment of a Christian. Luke tells us that they “looked intently” at Stephen.

- Stephen's face and demeanor radiated the Spirit of God. He was calm, confident, at peace, secure, courageous, and not afraid or angry.

PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS BE PEOPLE

- People will always be a challenge. Christians must be humble and gracious, and **we must realize we can also slip into prejudice and divisiveness if we're not close to Jesus.**

- Holding firmly to the majors of our faith while letting go of minor disagreements will help us honor Jesus in how we act.

AT A HIGHER LEVEL

- **Organization, intentionality, excellence, strong work ethic, and transparency** are all God-honoring principles.
- Though we will never be perfect, **Christians should strive to live, work, respond, and lead at a high level because we represent Jesus and Christianity**

QUALIFIED TO MINISTER?

- How we live is a witness intended to bless and minister to others. There are many ways we do this, from pastoring to helping feed people.
- Whatever we're called to do, we're **incapable of doing it effectively without the Holy Spirit, a good reputation, and wisdom.**

EXCELLENCE AND MINISTERING

- We can only function at a high level and minister to others if we worship God and live in the balance of **Spirit and truth.**
- We are to live and worship with logic and reason (mind) but also love and emotion (heart). **When our faith is strong and balanced, we are productive people!**

RADIATING THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Stephen **radiated the Holy Spirit.** Do we?
- Are we **humble** yet **secure** and **confident** in who we are? Do we know and speak **truth in love?** Are we **calm** in tension? Are we **peaceful?** Are we fearful or angry in the face of opposition? Are we **courageous?** Are we **balanced** in Spirit and truth?