

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 15TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

CHOSEN (ACTS 6:1-7) "IN THOSE DAYS"

Because the apostles were teaching and proclaiming the good news every day (5:42), the church continued to grow.

- For the first time in Acts, those who believed are described as disciples.
- **Being a disciple is more than following a leader; it is obedience in faith, fueled by belief, that becomes a way of life.**

THE COMPLAINT

Exciting growth also brought new problems.

- The Greek-speaking disciples felt that their widows were not receiving the same care as the Aramaic-speaking widows.
- Luke doesn't hide conflicts and difficulties that existed in the early church.
- **It's great to recognize what God is doing, but it's dangerous to ignore the challenges that come with change.**

THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

The OT has much to say about taking care of widows, and Luke sees the bigger picture.

- The claim that "there was not a needy person among them" was in jeopardy if any group in the community was neglected (4:34).
- This issue was becoming divisive.
- **Ministry will always suffer when we aren't willing to adjust our structure to make room for growth.**

LEADERSHIP TAKING THE LEAD

After summoning the whole company of disciples, the apostles accepted responsibility for the problem. They were trying to do too much and every part of the ministry was suffering.

- They didn't minimize service, but they did recognize their primary responsibilities were to pray and to preach the Word.
- **Any time we spread ourselves too thin, we will experience a spiritual deficiency that opens the door for problems to develop.**

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES

The apostles proposed a solution that would allow them to focus on their priorities without neglecting the essential work of the church.

- Now, the church would recognize other disciples with good reputations, who were full of the Spirit and displayed wisdom in their daily lives.
- These requirements reveal that the ministry of care was valued and new leaders would be faithfully committed to service.

AN EXCELLENT SOLUTION

The whole company was pleased with the plan.

- The new leaders would be devoted to the ministry of service, and the apostles would focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word.
- **The reason there are so many places to serve is because there is so much work to do. If any ministry is missing servants, all ministry suffers. Every role is important in ministry.**

"FULL OF FAITH AND THE HOLY SPIRIT"

Although it may have been true of each leader, Luke specifically says that Stephen was "full of faith and the Holy Spirit."

- When we see "full of" we can easily substitute the words "controlled by."
- **As we serve, we should be people who are controlled by the Holy Spirit, faith, and godly wisdom—that's spiritual growth. Only then will we be ready for the change that comes with physical growth.**

RESULTS

Because the apostles were free to fulfill their roles and others were faithfully doing other required ministry, the church grew in maturity and numbers.

- Included in those numbers were many priests.
- It's probable that some of the Sadducees became Believers.
- **As the gospel is shared and the church serves, many people will come to faith in Christ—even religious people!**

STRONG (ACTS 6:8-10)

STEPHEN

We find out why Luke pointed out Stephen. He served and also became a great teacher of the Word.

- Stephen speaks and acts with authority and ends up being confronted by the religious opposition.
- They weren't just office holders; they were leaders of a synagogue, and they devoted themselves to learning and teaching Scripture.

OPPOSITION

Coming from several communities and having years of education, the religious opposition felt prepared to debate Stephen about the message he was sharing with the community.

- Everything they had studied (the OT) had pointed to the Messiah, but they had misunderstood.
- Now, Stephen was there to open their eyes to the truth with the good news of Christ.

WRONG VS. WISDOM

They made their arguments, but each time Stephen responded in wisdom, and the truth prevailed at every point of discussion.

- They chose to hold on to their misunderstanding, even when their arguments couldn't stand up against truth.
- **There will always be a point where we should admit that we are wrong, accept the truth, and find the peace we are looking for.**

LIES (ACTS 6:11-15)

PERSUADED

When their arguments continued to fail in the theological debate with Stephen, they turned to deception and slander.

- More than likely, they paid someone to lie about the content of Stephen's message.
- **In our culture, people make great profit as they attack Believers and accuse them of everything but loving and caring for the lost. Can we stand against the false accusations?**

THE CHARGE AGAINST STEPHEN

The lies grew to include blasphemy. Stephen was accused of speaking against the law and even against the temple.

- The Sanhedrin refused to believe that Christ came to fulfill the law; all they could hear was *remove*. And they couldn't believe that the temple was no longer necessary because Jesus had made a way for the presence of God to be known by every Believer.

FACED WITH A DECISION

As the charges were presented in the religious court, all of the Sanhedrin stared into the face of the accused.

- This man whom they wanted to kill had the appearance of one who had been in the holy presence of God.
- **Faithfulness can be seen, not just heard. Living in obedience to God changes everything about us, and the world WILL notice.**

SERVING

- Serving sometimes looks hard.
- **Honestly, sometimes it is VERY hard.**
- **When serving is something we just do for others, it can be completely exhausting. When we serve under God's direction and protection, we find strength beyond our own.**

MINISTRY

- Ministry doesn't exist without serving.
- **Christian service doesn't exist without ministry.**
- **The idea that these two are separate and exclusive is not biblical. Because they can't be separated, they cannot be prioritized. Our priority is obedience to God using the gifts and opportunities He gives us. Are we obeying God or trying to do everything ourselves?**

KEY

- There is always a key element in any success.
- **It can't be faked or copied.**
- **If we want to continue to grow in faith and numbers, we will need to be Spirit-filled. Every leader, servant, and individual must be prepared to do what God has given us the opportunity to do. Will we stop weighing value by our roles? Our value to God is seen in Jesus' sacrifice; His value to us is seen in our obedience. Spirit-filled = Spirit-led. Are we filled and led?**