

Acts 6

Choosing of the Seven

Now at this time, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint developed on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 Instead, brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 The announcement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

6 And they brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. 7 The word of God kept spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

10 But they were unable to cope with his wisdom and the Spirit by whom he was speaking. 11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

12 And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away, and brought him before the Council. 13 They put forward false witnesses who said,

This man does not stop speaking against this holy place and the Law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses handed down to us." 15 And all who were sitting in the Council stared at him, and they saw his face, which was like the face of an angel.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

What questions were provoked within you?

Did anything confuse you?

Did anything move you emotionally?

Did God instruct you to do something?

Did you gain any insight into God's character?

Paul's observations and insights

1. As they grew in number problems began to arise. Are problems a problem?

2. A problem is an unwanted situation that needs to be dealt with or overcome.

3. I believe God gives solutions to problems if we ask Him to inspire us, with His will being done.

4. Widows being overlooked is not good, but a segregated overlooking of widows is not good at all!

5. The term 'widows indeed' is to be without absolutely any support whatsoever.
6. The apostles were not willing to be distracted by the domestic management of caring for the church. Was this right?
7. They felt that prayer and preaching of the word was more important for them to focus on. Was that right?
8. The early church structure of leadership was, elders dealt with prayer and preaching, deacons/servants dealt with domestic and practical.
9. The quality criteria to serve as a deacon had a high standard. Why was it so high?
10. How important is it for the people to take the responsibility of running the church?
11. The church people believed this was a good way forward - they agreed with the apostles - so it was the people who picked the leaders but it was the apostles who appointed them to lead.
12. They anointed the seven chosen. Why do we lay hands on people in prayer?
13. The apostles were preaching well and the church in Jerusalem grew to a large size.
14. There were many priests of the Jews that were being converted to Christianity, can you imagine how wonderful that must have been?
15. One of the seven, a man named Stephen, was also working in the manifestation of signs and wonders and seeing many healed and blessed. Can we all work miracles?
16. Unfortunately for Stephen a religious sect among the Jews decided to stop this revolution among the Jewish community.
17. The sect attacked Stephen, first with arguments regarding the law and Jewish history and then dragging him off to be stoned.
18. Look what it was that enabled Stephen to thwart their attempts to sabotage his crusade.
19. Arguing and apologetics never won a person through and into salvation. Unless God draws someone they won't truly come.
20. It was Stephen's spirit and his wisdom that proved too much for his accusers.
21. The only way they could achieve their evil intention of stopping Stephen making progress, was to use lies and deception, just like they did with Daniel.
22. They made false allegations about what Stephen had said and lies against Moses and God.
23. This sect stirred up the people, scribes and the elders, so as to create a riot to destroy Stephen by stoning him!
24. How is Stephen feeling being dragged away to experience a judgement that was untrue?
25. 'They said' – 'he said' - why do people think the inclusiveness of what others say will strengthen their argument?
26. 'The sect fixed their gaze' – this was to stare Stephen out with hostility and intimidation.
27. Stephen's response to all this hostility was to shine with the face of an angel!
How do you fight your battles?