

## **Acts Chapter 6**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every growing church has problems. The early church was no exception. Our section opens with a serious division within the church. Grecian Jews (those Jews who'd been brought up with Greek education and culture) are complaining that the more conservative Hebraic Jews are getting better treatment than they are. (Here was a practical, racial and cultural problem.) Out of this unease, another threat also develops—not only divisiveness but diversion (v.2). The danger is that the Apostles will be pressured to stop doing the best thing, for the sake of doing a good thing. The ministry of serving tables and preaching are both important but prayer and preaching had to come first for the apostles, they knew that getting too caught up in administration could mean their praying and preaching would suffer.

### **Questions for discussions**

- Given 2: 44-45, and 4:32 how could the widows be neglected?

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- How do the apostles resolve this problem? What qualifications were the chosen leaders expected to possess?

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- What secondary issues hinder your church from fulfilling Acts 1:8? What principles here could help you free the church for a wider mission?

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- What six features of Stephen's character and ministry are mentioned in verses 5-10?

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- Were there any no-go areas in terms of ministry prescribed to Stephen and the other 6 - in other words were they to "serve at tables" only?

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- After failing to silence Stephen through debate, the Jews try to silence him through the law. How is the opposition to Stephen like and unlike the opposition the apostles faced from the Sanhedrin (5: 27-28)?

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## CONCLUSION

**SETTLING UNITY ISSUES today.** Some leaders try to sweep problems like those faced in Acts 6 under the carpet because they do not want to face the humiliation that comes if such problems surface. Others attempt to force a unity through exercises of worship or external affirmations of unity, like picnics and hugs. Others are overcome by hurt in that, despite their good intentions and hard work, people attribute bad motives to them. Still others may feel offended by the attitude of the grumblers and focus on that attitude without dealing with the root of the problem. Such delays in dealing with problems usually aggravate situations and open the door for mighty explosions, which result in major church splits.

Christ's teaching on the problems relating to unity is clear: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23—24). Regardless of whether we think this brother is justified to be angry with us and whether he has been honorable in his actions or not, we must go to him immediately. So urgent is the issue that we should hold back at the altar a gift we have come to give. Elsewhere Paul said, "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26—27). In family life and in community life, if we delay dealing with anger, we give the devil a foothold.

- How do we practise this advice today?
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