



January 6, 2016  
Acts 6:1-15  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

### Exegetical Study

1. **Acts 6:1-7** – *“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”*
  - a. Bible scholars believe the Church numbered about 8,000 to 10,000 men and women.
  - b. Pastor Gary said, “When you get to be a large church like that, you have the tendency to start to inadvertently, unintentionally, overlook the needs of people. That’s one of the downsides of a larger church. The larger a church gets, the easier it is for people to fall through the cracks, so to speak. One of the benefits of a small church is that everybody kind of knows each other, and when somebody is missing from church, you can call them and say, ‘Hey, I noticed you [weren’t at church].’ ... [With this many Christians it was easier to overlook people, so the Church had its first major challenge.]”
  - c. The deacon ministry was born out of a desire to care for people who were being overlooked as the church grew. (See **Acts 6:1**)
    - i. In **Acts 6:1**, the KJV translates “daily distribution of food” as “the daily

*ministration.”*

- ii. The Greek word for ministration is diakonia, which is where we get the English word deacon.<sup>1</sup>
- iii. Pastor Gary said, “My personal opinion is that in some churches the ministry of deacons has taken on something that it was never intended to be; like in some churches the idea of the deacon ministry is often something that is a governing body, [and they run the church]. ... Deacons were lay leaders who stepped up to help meet a need.”
- d. The deacon ministry was born out of a desire to keep the ministry of the Word and prayer the priority of the church. (See [Acts 6:2, 4](#))
  - i. In [Acts 6:2](#), the Greek for the phrase “*wait on tables*” is the verb form of diakonia, which is diakoneo.<sup>2</sup>
  - ii. They recognized that there was a lot of ministry that needed to take place, but they also recognized that they were called to the ministry of the Word and prayer.
  - iii. Pastor Gary said, “Teaching the Bible and making sure that the Church is built on the foundation of the Word of God is absolutely paramount. Listen, every other ministry should flow out of the ministry of the Word of God. Everything in a local church should emanate and flow out of a healthy teaching of the Word of God. That is why it is such a priority here at Cornerstone [Chapel]. We have a [lot] of ministries at our church, but we don’t involve and exercise ourselves in those ministries to the neglect of the Word of God. ... What changes a person’s heart? It’s not because a church offers a lot of ministries. What changes a person’s heart is [when] they hear the Word of God, and the power of the Word of God does a good and miraculous work in the heart of the person, and they respond to the gospel [and the Word of God] and [they] get saved. When you start putting the Bible on a shelf and then just start having a bunch of activities in a church, it makes the church nothing more than a country club. [It’s] just a place where people can socialize, fellowship, have a cup of coffee, and get to meet each other.”
- e. In [Acts 6:3](#), we learn that the first group of deacons had two qualifications: be full of the Spirit and have wisdom.
  - i. All seven of these men were Greek, which makes it worth noting that the people who were complaining were Greek, so they were the ones tasked with the ministry assignment!
- f. We read in [Romans 16:1](#) that the deacon ministry included women.
  - i. [Romans 16:1](#) - *“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G1248&t=KJV>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G1247&t=NIV>

- ii. A deacon is really a servant, which Jesus modeled.
    - 1. **Matthew 20:28** - *"... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*
  - g. Twelve Qualifications vs. Two Qualifications
    - i. **1 Timothy 3:8-13** - *"Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus."*
    - ii. The qualifications for elders and deacons are almost identical.
      - 1. Elders are not permitted to drink.
        - a. **1 Timothy 3:3** - *"... not given to drunkenness..."*
        - b. The Greek word for the phrase *"not given to drunkenness"* is paroinos.<sup>3</sup>
          - i. Para means near and oinos means wine, which means elders are not to be near alcoholic beverages.
      - 2. Deacons are not to indulge *"in much wine."*
  - h. The result of delegating ministry.
    - i. **Acts 6:7** - *"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."*
2. **Acts 6:8-15** - *"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) - Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, 'We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.' So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, 'This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.' All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face*

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G3943&t=NIV>

*of an angel.”*

- a. The Synagogue of the Freedmen was made up of men who had been freed, either paying or being set free by the slave holders.
- b. These men were either from the Greek Empire or the Roman Empire.
- c. Stephen’s countenance showed the glory of God.
- d. Stephen was a godly man who did not shy away from declaring the truth, and that boldness would lead to his being martyred.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the 1984 New International Version (NIV)