

# The Choosing of the Seven

## Ice-Breaker

Which responsibility at home or work would you gladly give up? Never give up?

## Scripture Passage

Acts 6:1-7

**6** 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

<sup>5</sup>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.<sup>6</sup> They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup>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.

## Bible Study

1. Given 2:44-45 and 4:32, how could the widows be neglected?
2. How do the apostles resolve this problem?
3. Why did they choose men "full of the Spirit and wisdom"?
4. Consider verse 6. Why such attention to a seemingly minor task?

## Reference Notes

**6:1** Many elderly Jews who had lived most of their lives elsewhere in the empire came to live in Jerusalem for their final years. Those who were widowed, now far from home, were subject to poverty. It was these women who were being neglected. **Grecian Jews.** Jews who came from outside Palestine and for whom Aramaic and Hebrew were relatively unknown languages. Their synagogue worship was also conducted in their native languages. **Hebraic Jews.** Native Palestinians who spoke Aramaic as their daily language. Since all the apostles were Hebraic Jews, it may be that they were naturally more sensitive and aware of the needs of those with whom they could easily communicate.

**6:2 wait on tables.** Literally, "to serve tables." This does not refer to being a waiter! Since banking at the time was done by people sitting at a table, to "serve tables" was a figure of speech for handling financial transactions. While many groups use this passage as the basis for the office of deacon, there is no title given to these men. However, the Greek verb "to serve" is the root word from which the English word "deacon" comes.

**6:5** The names of the men chosen strongly indicate that all seven were Greek-speaking Jews. They perhaps also served as a bridge between the Palestinian apostles and the Greek-speaking Jews to help avoid further unintentional difficulties between the two groups. **Stephen.** This man moves to center stage in chapter 7. **Philip.** Like Stephen, Philip demonstrated gifts of evangelism not unlike those of the apostles (see v. 8; 8:4-8; 21:8). Of the other men nothing more is known.

**6:6 laid their hands on them.** In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands signified either a blessing (Genesis 48:14) or a commissioning (Numbers 27:18,23). The act signified that these seven would now be the representatives of the apostles in the matter over which they were given responsibility.

**6:7 priests.** Most priests lived outside of Jerusalem, serving in the temple only two weeks out of every year. While the Sadducees controlled the priesthood, many of the priests, like Zechariah the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:6), were sincerely devout men.

## Caring Time

1. What secondary issues hinder your church from fulfilling Acts 1:8?
2. Does your church put as high credentials and blessing on the minor tasks? What if it did?