



to
the **ENDS**
of
the **EARTH**

Studies in the Book of Acts

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Acts 6.1-7 | October 9, 2016

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series *To the Ends of the Earth*, engaging a sort of “division of labor” in the early church. And alongside it, an increased “profit margin”!

II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever been given a home cooked meal? Or a plate of fresh-out-of-the-oven cookies?

If so, how did it make you feel?

III. Study the Text

- a. Before engaging chapter 6, carefully read Acts 5.42. Try summarizing this passage in your own words, as if it were occurring today:

- b. Read Acts 6.1.

Recall that chapter divisions were not originally included in the books of the Bible (and weren't added in until the 1200s!). How, then, do you understand the connection between Acts 5.42 and the first part of 6.1?

In other words, what relationship does the disciples' “day after day... and from house to house” proclamation have to do with the growth of the church?

What problem do we uncover in the second half of Acts 6.1?

Why do you think it's significant enough for Luke to bring up?

- c. It's been written that “success leads to an overload for the apostles in their administration of the common fund for the poor.” (see Deuteronomy 1.9-13 for a similar season in Moses' life)

We see hints of this “common fund” in Acts 2.42 and further development in 4.32-35, though its roots start much further back. Turn to Deuteronomy 10.14-22, meditating on God's command to His people.

How are you convicted by these verses? How should verses like this challenge Good Shepherd as a whole?

d. Reread Acts 6.1.

Who is complaining against who? Why?

William Larkin explains, "The fact that it is *Grecian Jews* who complain against *Hebraic* believers shows that cultural tensions probably lie behind the oversight. Pious *widows*, having been removed from the temple's [weekly basket of food] are now dependent on the church's daily distribution. But the apostles, Hebraic Jews, are not making sure the Grecian widows receive their share.

Hebraic Jews had a prejudicial sense of superiority over Grecian Jews, because of their own birthplace and language. Lack of communication between the groups also fostered suspicion. In fact, human diversity will always bring with it opportunities for prejudicial division and injustice."

Where have you seen historically similar prejudicial division and injustice?

Where do you see such prejudicial division and injustice today?

What role do you think Christians have in addressing such prejudicial division and injustice?

e. To see how these earliest followers of Jesus engaged their own biases, read Acts 6.2-4.

What do you make of verse 2? If you're meeting in a group, spend some time reading the different translations of Scripture available. If you're engaging this study on your own, click onto BibleGateway.com and look up a few different versions.

How do these different translations help you understand the disciples' rationale?

Does it seem like they're disparaging those in need?

f. Will Willimon writes, "the disciples are not disparaging such work; they are taking decisive action so that this necessary social administration might be assured – even though their words imply that the task of preaching is a primary apostolic duty."

Are you convinced? Why or why not?

g. It has been argued, "This activity is essential for church vitality and growth. The apostles are facing the decisions that come to leaders of a movement that is growing in numbers and complexity."

What do you make of that statement? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

h. In verse 3, qualifications for these roles are prescribed. Write them here, in your own words:

What qualifications are *not* mentioned? List all that you can think of:

Why do you think there aren't more stringent requirements for these roles?
What would you have added? Why?

- i. What will this new ministry team free up the other disciples to do? (see verse 4)

Why is this important?

It's been written, "[t]he proposed solution reveals the values that guided the decision: commitment to unity, to a holistic ministry and to growth by means of preaching and teaching. The decision-making process reflects equally important values for church order. It is participatory, because of the church's spiritual equality. It involves distinct roles for leaders and congregation. The leaders propose a solution and the criteria for implementing it. They also confirm the congregation's implementation. The congregation must 'own' the proposed solution and do their assigned part."

Did you realize *all that* was in there!? What do you think of the above insights?

What is your "assigned part"?

- j. Read Acts 6.5-7.

What do you notice in the list of names? Read between the lines – there's an important geographical (and theological) statement hidden in the names of those men.

- k. What's the end result of this "division of labor"? See verse 7.

How does this speak to the ministry of Good Shepherd's mission statement, "Inviting all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God's family"?

Who has a role to play in this mission? Who – on the other hand – isn't needed?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to give us eyes to see any implicit biases we – like the early disciples – may have, and the courage to repent,
- b. Pray that God would call Covenant Partners in our church family to serve as Elders and Deacons,
- c. Lift up the children and youth of Good Shepherd, that they would be lights for Jesus on their campuses.

Weekly Reading Schedule

Monday, October 10th	Acts 5.1-11
Tuesday, October 11th	Acts 5.12-16
Wednesday, October 12th	Acts 5.17-32
Thursday, October 13th	Acts 5.33-42
Friday, October 14th	Acts 6.1-7