

These deacons they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:6)

Abiding God, you always do what you say you will do. We trust in your promises for your people and pray that you would form us into people of integrity whose words and actions would also match. Let us be trustworthy servants who share the love and mercy of Christ with the world. We pray this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

In the early days of the Church, everyone shared what they had with those who were in need. In order to make sure the distribution was sufficient and fair, the apostles chose seven men and made them deacons to serve on behalf of the Church. They made sure everyone was taken care of.

Read: Acts 6:1-15

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The believers of the early Church cared for each other and took care of one another's needs. They met together in Scripture and prayer, and they lived their lives in love and service to their neighbors. At this time, most of the first Christians were people of Jewish background. They spoke the same language and were used to worshiping together. However, as the church continued to grow, many Gentiles (non-Jews) also became followers of Jesus as well.

This was one of the first challenges faced by the early church. Though Jews and Gentiles saw each other as foreigners, God taught them how to be one community in Christ. As Paul later wrote: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

Discussion Questions

1. Why were the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) complaining about the Hebrews (native Jews)? Did they have a good reason for being upset?
2. Why did the believers decide to choose seven additional leaders for the church? What were the original disciples focusing on? Why are both these tasks important?
3. What were the names of the people chosen for this new responsibility? What did the disciples do to set these seven leaders apart?
4. Why do we remember Stephen in particular from this list of men? What about him was so remarkable? Do you know what eventually happened to him?
5. If we do good things for others in our life, does this mean that everyone will like us? Why would we strive to do what is good and right, even when we are not appreciated or recognized by the world?
6. The Greek word "deacon" means "servant." Why do you think the disciples considered service to others to be such an important part of faith? How did Jesus exemplify for us the role of a servant?
7. Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13, where Paul describes the qualities that should be expected from a servant of God. Why is it important that our outward behavior reflects our inward faith?
8. What are some things you do because you are a servant of God? Are these things you would do if you were *not* a person of faith? Why or why not?