

Lesson 3: Integrity



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?

Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

The New Testament begins about 3/4 of the way through the Bible.

The New Testament: Service

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.

Biblical Background

Most of the very first Christians were people with a Jewish background. They spoke the same language and were used to worshipping 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).

When in Time?

From the time of Alexander the Great (356-325 B.C.), the Greek culture and language dominated the ancient world. Greek was the international language in Jesus' day, and for many years after. This is why the New Testament was written in Greek, not Hebrew (like the Old Testament).



Discuss: Acts 6:1-15

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?

Where in the World?

The map to the right shows the three major areas of the Holy Land referred to in the New Testament: **Judea** in the south, **Galilee** in the north, and **Samaria** in between. The first Apostles traveled throughout all these regions.

- a) In the ovals on the map to the right, label the major bodies of water with the names they are called in the New Testament. (If you need to, use the map in the back of your Bible.)

The Great Sea**The Dead Sea****The Sea of Galilee****The Jordan River**

On the day he ascended into heaven, Jesus told his disciples, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This is exactly what happened!

- b) Centering in Jerusalem, draw concentric circles farther and farther out from the city, like ripples that spread when a rock is thrown in a pond.

