



The Full Number of the Disciples

Acts 6:1-7

Dr. Tony Chute, Lead Pastor

Overview: The early church is often portrayed as a model of what the modern church should be like—bold preaching, powerful praying, meaningful gatherings, everyone sharing, and exponential growth. Luke points out, however, that the early church was far from perfect. As the church grew numerically and cross-culturally, certain members within the church felt as though they were being overlooked in the daily distribution. The twelve apostles acknowledge the needs of the congregation but understand that their focus should be on preaching and prayer. They summon the whole number of the disciples and instruct them to choose men of good character who are full of the Holy Spirit so they can meet the needs of the membership. When the men are selected by the congregation and affirmed by the apostles, the wisdom of such a move becomes clear—the word of God continued to increase, the number of disciples multiplied, and many more were converted.

01. Church members may have legitimate concerns that deserve to be heard and addressed; but we should all guard against a critical spirit and divisive intent.

02. Church leaders have legitimate areas of service that need extra time and attention; but they should guard against an elitist spirit and detrimental attitude.

03. Church members and church leaders have been gifted by God to raise up and recognize new leaders who will serve the body and preserve the unity of the church.

I will build my church

1. What was the occasion for the complaint in Acts 6:1? Was this a legitimate complaint? To answer this question more fully, trace the words “complain” and “grumble” in the Bible using a concordance or search engine. What do people complain or grumble about in the Bible? Which complaints/grumbings bring about judgment? Which complaints/grumbings are heard and properly addressed?

2. Note that the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples in order to address this problem. What do their actions suggest about the various giftings in the church? What do their actions suggest about leadership working with membership in order to resolve problems in the church? In what ways can leadership and membership work together in order to resolve problems in the church?

3. What instructions were given for the selection of those who would “wait on tables”? Why does a person’s character matter when it comes to tasks not directly related to preaching the Word? Is there any area of service in the church where character does not matter? Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for further insight.

4. What does the appointment of the seven in this passage allow the twelve to continue doing? Does this mean that those who are in pastoral or elder positions should not be engaged with the physical needs and material demands of members in the church? What other areas—besides the daily distribution—might be addressed in the church by deacons and members?

5. What was the result of the decision to appoint people to manage the daily distribution, according to verse 7? In what ways can you assist in serving the church so the Word of God will continue to increase and the number of disciples multiply?

For Further Reading: Matt Smethurst, *Deacons: How They Serve and Strengthen the Church* (Crossway, 2021)

I will build my church