

ACTS 6 — UNITY, WISDOM, AND FAITHFUL WITNESS

Big Picture

Acts 6 shows how the Spirit-led church responds to internal tension and growing external opposition. As the community expands, practical needs and cultural differences threaten unity. The apostles respond with wisdom by appointing Spirit-filled leaders to serve the church's needs. This decision preserves the central mission of prayer and the ministry of the word. The chapter then introduces Stephen, whose faithful witness sets the stage for the first Christian martyrdom and the next phase of the church's mission.

Structure of the Chapter

- 6:1–7 — The Appointment of the Seven
- 6:8–10 — Stephen's Spirit-Filled Ministry
- 6:11–14 — False Accusations and Arrest
- 6:15 — Stephen Before the Council

Key Themes

Unity in a Growing Church (6:1–7).

As the number of disciples increases, tension arises between Hellenistic and Hebrew believers over the care of widows. Rather than ignoring the problem, the apostles address it directly. They appoint seven respected, Spirit-filled leaders to oversee the ministry of distribution so the apostles can remain devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word. The solution preserves both unity and mission.

Questions to consider: Where might practical needs in the church create opportunities for division? How can wise leadership strengthen unity rather than weaken it?

Spirit-Filled Service (6:3–6).

The seven men chosen are not merely administrators—they are described as being full of the Spirit and wisdom. Even practical service in the church requires spiritual maturity. The laying on of hands demonstrates that their role is a recognized ministry within the life of the church.

Questions to consider: Do I see acts of service as spiritual ministry? How can I use my gifts to strengthen the church?

Faithful Witness in the Face of Opposition (6:8–14).

Stephen begins performing signs and wonders and engaging in debate with synagogue leaders. His opponents cannot withstand the wisdom given by the Spirit, so they resort to false accusations of blasphemy against Moses, the law, and the temple. Like Jesus before him, Stephen becomes the target of unjust charges because of his bold witness.

Questions to consider: How do I respond when faithfulness to Christ brings opposition? Am I prepared to stand firm in truth with humility and courage?

God's Presence in the Midst of Persecution (6:15).

As Stephen stands before the Sanhedrin, Luke notes that his face appeared “like the face of an angel.” This image recalls Moses’ radiant face after encountering God’s glory. Even in the moment of accusation, Stephen bears visible evidence of God’s presence.

Questions to consider: Where do I need to trust God’s presence in difficult situations? What does it look like to reflect God’s character under pressure?

Major Takeaways

- The church must protect unity as it grows.
- Spiritual leadership includes both proclamation and service.
- Wise organization strengthens gospel mission.
- Faithful witness may provoke opposition.
- God’s presence sustains his people in trials.