

Psalm 133 A song of ascents. Of David.

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

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Acts 6: 1-7

Adapting to changing circumstances

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group.

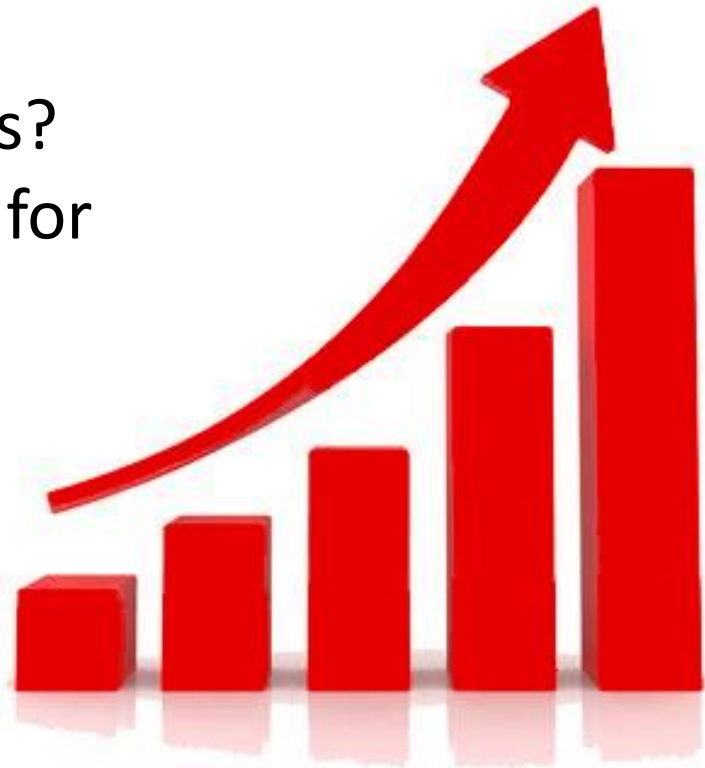
They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.



A very good thing?

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing,

Life brings problems? – challenges?
Do we see them as opportunities for
change and growth?



Problems!

the Grecian Jews among them **complained** against the Hebraic Jews



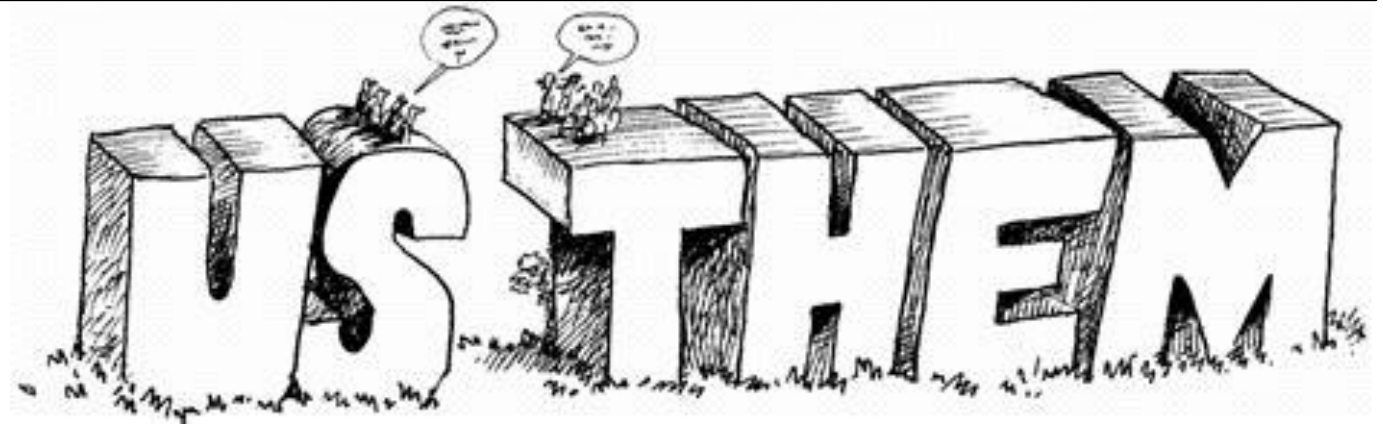
They complained?
It's not what you say.. It's the way
that you say it.
They took it to the
apostles/leaders rather than
'taking the huff'

We assume it was the apostles
that were trying to do the job.

Them and Us

the **Grecian Jews among them** complained against the **Hebraic Jews** because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

Both groups are Jewish!
They are all living in Jerusalem
BUT



(US)- some come from abroad, a Greek background – different language/culture?
(THEM) – the Hebraic Jews are ‘the locals’

This was Satan’s opportunity to cause trouble.

The believers' food bank

the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because **their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.**

The church wanted to care for their vulnerable widows (and orphans)

Was the neglect true?
Is that how it appeared?
Was it intentional?



Let's talk

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together



The leaders obviously discussed and prayed about it first
Then they gathered everybody together (or at least their representatives)
No one is left out in this meeting.

Priorities have to come first

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables."



We can't handle this any longer because we have other priorities.

We have a calling to minister God's word

Waiting on tables (handling the money) – is important but it's taking us away from our first calling.

This isn't about superiority – it's about each of us doing what God wants.

God's Family

Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

Family (brothers & sisters)

– we are not enemies or opponents.
It's a problem we can solve together
with God's help.



YOU choose seven men

Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

You choose 7 men who are qualified
Why 7 – enough for the present work?
Full of the Spirit
Full of wisdom – practical men who are competent to do the job.



This is not a 'low grade' job they will be doing.

They are to be 'known' men who have proved their character among them already.

Share the load

We will turn this responsibility over to them

We'll give them the responsibility
– trust them to do a good job

It is a 'responsible' position
– accountable to God
and the people they will serve



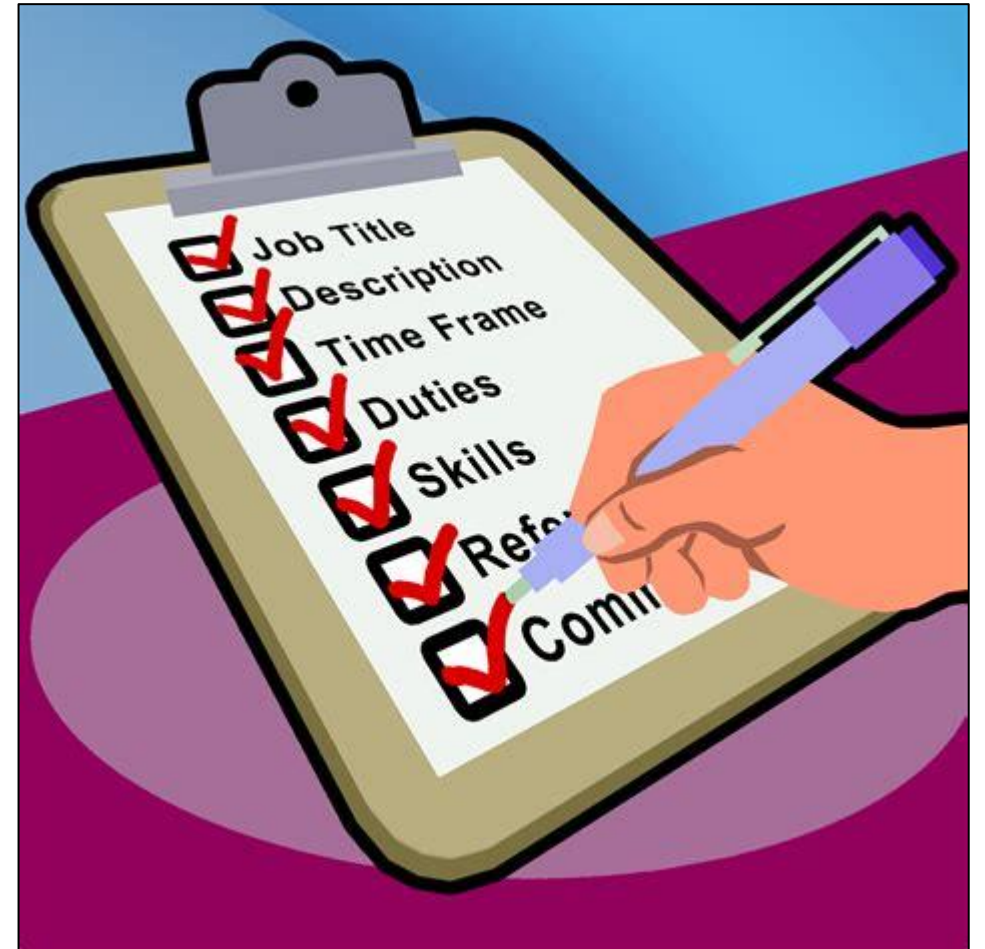
Our work

"We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

Our time-demanding work is what the Lord gave us to do:-

- prayer (for strength and guidance)
- ministering food of the spiritual kind
(cf. John 21:17 Jesus said *to Peter*,
"Feed my sheep.")

It's true in some measure for all disciples



This proposal pleased the whole group.

We see the unity of the Spirit as God shows them the right way forward.



How did they choose them?

They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit;

They looked for godly character.

Stephen is mentioned as full of faith and the Holy Spirit, but it would be true of them all (we see that later in Philip)



also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas,
and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

Notice a generous concession by the Hebraic Jews?
All these men have non-Hebrew sounding names -
They made a special effort to help the Grecian part
of the family.

Nicolas originally from a gentile background
– he's found Israel's Messiah



Set apart

They presented these men to the apostles,
who prayed and laid their hands on them.



The apostles publicly pray for them (It's good to be prayed for)

They publicly set them apart with the responsibility for the work.

Everybody knows that they are the ones to contact

The result:

So the word of God spread.
The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly,



All the widows get the help they need.
People are joyfully united.
The risk of division is averted.
The people spread the word.
God blesses it. (Psalm 133)

Numbers increase **RAPIDLY** - new growth.

A special group trust in the Lord

and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.



A significant group in Jerusalem
Men who knew the Bible and who
recognised the atoning sacrifice of
Jesus.

“Obedient to the faith”

They believed **and** lived it as Jesus had
told them to do.

Adapting to changing circumstances

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they did things in a new way.
(This is the beginning of the ministry of people named 'deacons')

Are we open to the Spirit's direction?

In a group (especially large ones)– people need to feel they belong and are cared for.

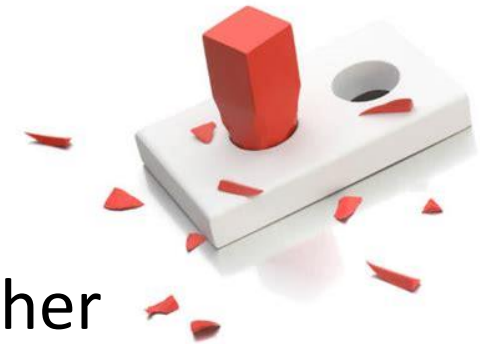
What can you give to help others?

Priorities matter– round pegs in round holes!

Unity matters– they were different but all in it together

Do we value others, even with our differences?

God's blessing follows – It was God's plan to move them forward.



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