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Called to Serve

Definitions in **bold letters** are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
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or Roget's Thesaurus – **August 6, 2017**

Acts 6:1-8

Introduction: In the **EARLY YEARS** of **Christianity**, it was important that God-appointed MEN and WOMEN be available to spread the gospel and build up NEW believers. Jesus had left His work in the hands of his apostles. But, the task quickly out grew them, and it became necessary for others to share it.

Wherever the gospel spread, **new congregations** were established, each with its own NEED for **LEADERS** and **HELPERS**. The Holy Spirit called regenerated persons to do this work, and this is largely the story of the Book of Acts.

(Source: The Bible Expositor and Illuminator, Union Press Publication-Christian Life Series)

Acts 6:1, *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was **multiplied**, there arose a **murmuring** (complaining [accusing of an offense]) of the **Grecians (Hellenist or Greek-speaking Jew)** against the **Hebrews**, because their widows WERE neglected in the daily ministrations (act of performing service).*

NOTE: Of the Grecians - The word used here is NOT what is commonly employed to designate the **inhabitants** of **Greece**, but it properly denotes those who **“imitate”** the CUSTOMS and HABITS of the GREEKS, who use the Greek language, etc. In the time when the gospel was first preached, there were **TWO classes of Jews** - those who remained in **Palestine**, who used the Hebrew language, and who were appropriately called “Hebrews”; AND those who were **scattered among** the **Gentiles**, who spoke the Greek language, and who used in their synagogues the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the **Septuagint**. These were called **“Hellenists,”** or, as it is in our translation, **“Grecians.”** These were doubtless the persons mentioned here - NOT those who were proselyted (converted) FROM Gentiles, but those of **Jewish origin** who were NOT natives of **Judea**, who had come up to Jerusalem to attend the great festivals. See Acts 2:5, Acts 2:9-11. *(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/acts-6.html>)*

Thought 1. This takes place approximately 2 years AFTER Pentecost when the Holy Spirit baptized and filled the 120 in Acts 2. *(Source: The Reese Chronological Bible, pg. 1416-1423)* These Christians were just recently BORN AGAIN! So, this is normal because they are immature and haven't grown beyond being partial as they live together. As you know, they were operating in “earthy, sensual, devilish wisdom,” which will always cause problems.

James 3:13-16, Who is a WISE MAN and endowed with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a GOOD **conversation (behavior)** his WORKS with **meekness (humility)** of **wisdom**. But if ye have bitter ENVYING and STRIFE in your hearts, glory NOT, and lie NOT against the truth.

This wisdom descendeth NOT from ABOVE, but is **earthy, sensual, DEVILISH**.

For where **envying** and **STRIFE** is, there is **confusion** and EVERY evil work.

Strife defined 2052, intrigue (a plot or scheme of a complicated nature, intended to effect some purpose by secret artifices [stratagem]), **FACTION** (a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are UNITED and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the RIGHTS of other citizens. DISCORD: disagreement among persons), **contention** [1. struggle; a violent effort to obtain something, or to resist a person, claim or injury. 2. DEBATE; controversy [agitation of contrary opinions]].

Acts 6:2, Then the **twelve** called the multitude of the **disciples** unto them, and said, It is NOT reason that we should **leave** the **word of God**, and **serve tables**.

NOTE: The twelve ... "shows that **Matthias** was ONE of the apostles, for it would take him to complete the list of the twelve."

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bcc/acts-6.html>)

NOTE: It is not reason - The original words used here properly denote "it is not pleasing or agreeable"; but the meaning evidently is, it is NOT "suitable" or "proper."

Leave the word of God - That we should **neglect** or **abandon the preaching** of the gospel so much as would be necessary if we attended personally to the distribution of the ALMS (anything given gratuitously [freely] to relieve the POOR, as money, food, or clothing) of (from) the church. The **"gospel"** is here called the **"Word of God,"** because it is his message; it is what he has spoken, or which he has commanded to be proclaimed...

Serve tables - This expression properly denotes **"to take care of,** or provide for the table, or for the **DAILY needs of a family."** It is an expression that properly applies to a **steward** or a **SERVANT**. (Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/acts-6.html>)

Acts 6:3, Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you **seven MEN** of **HONEST report**, full (powerful) of (from) the **Holy Ghost** and **wisdom**, whom **we** may appoint over **this business**.

NOTE: ...look ye out among you seven men - Choose persons in whom ye can all confide, who will distribute the provisions IMPARTIALLY, and in DUE TIME; and let these persons be the **objects of the choice** both of the **Hebrews** and **Hellenists**, that ALL cause of murmuring and discontent may be done away. .

Of honest report - Persons to **whose character** there is authentic testimony, well known and accredited (believed, accepted).

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/acc/acts-6.html>)

NOTE: And wisdom - Prudence, or skill, to make a wise and equable distribution. The **qualifications of deacons** are still further stated and illustrated in **1 Timothy 3:8-10**.

In this place it is seen that they must be people of eminent piety and fair character, and that they must possess **"prudence,"** or **wisdom**, to **manage the affairs** connected with their office. These qualifications are indispensable to a FAITHFUL discharge of the DUTY entrusted to the officers of the church.

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/acts-6.html>)

1 Timothy 3:8-12, Likewise must the **deacons** be **grave (venerable** [honorable: honest), NOT **doubletongued (equivocal** [lying]), NOT given to much wine, NOT greedy of **filthy lucre**; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also FIRST **be proved (approve** [show to be worthy of approbation: approval]); THEN let them use the office of a deacon, being found **blameless**. Even so must their **wives** be **grave** (honest), NOT **slanderers**, sober, **faithful** in all things. Let the **DEACONS** be the HUSBANDS of one WIFE, RULING their children and their own houses well.

Deacons defined 1249. diakonos pronounced dee-ak'-on-os; (to run on errands;

an attendant, i.e. a WAITER (at table or in other menial duties), specially, a Christian teacher and pastor (tech., a deacon or DEACONESS [a FEMALE deacon in the primitive {first} church.]), MINISTER, SERVANT.

Thought 1. As we saw, Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12 speak of MEN being deacons. Since MEN with the MORALS listed by Luke and Paul, had the ability to “RULE WELL”: in the FEAR of the Lord (Yahweh), AND the Church was in its EARLY stage, this was the BEST God could do (according to his wisdom) to solve the problem of providing LEADERS and helpers UNTIL some in the Body of Christ could grow up and be equipped for ministry.

What’s been often overlooked by most Christians is the qualifications for “leadership” do NOT include being of a certain GENDER: a MAN. You did see that the definition of Deacon included “deaconess: a FEMALE deacon? The Greek word for “**deacons: (#1249),**” in 1 Tim. 3:8, 12 and Phil. 1:1, is also in Rom. 16:1-2. In English, the word is: “SERVANT” speaking of Phebe, who was taking care of “Church “BUSINESS”: helping people.

Romans 16:1-2, I commend unto you **Phebe** our **SISTER**, which is a **SERVANT (deaconess)** of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive HER IN the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist HER in whatsoever **BUSINESS** she hath need of you: for she hath been a **succourer** (person that affords RELIEF) of **MANY**, and of myself also.

Thought 2. We saw the definition of Deacon also means Christian teacher, PASTOR, or MINISTER. Paul used this Greek word when speaking of himself.

Ephesians 3:7-8, That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a **MINISTER**, according to the gift of the grace of God ...

Thought 3. Another set of scriptures that’s help us understand that these are NOT GENDER qualifications are found in TWO other letters by Paul.

Colossians 1:18...and he (*Jesus*) IS the **HEAD** of the **body**, the **church...**

Galatians 3:28, There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is **neither** bond NOR free, there is neither **MALE** nor **FEMALE:** for ye are all **ONE** IN Christ Jesus.

Thought 4. So, Christians should NEVER mention GENDER or RACE when speaking of the ministry of the body of Christ because they do NOT exist IN him.

Acts 6:4, *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the **ministry of the word.***

NOTE: What is the great business of gospel ministers -- to give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word they must still be either **fitting** and **furnishing themselves** for those **services**, or **employing** themselves in them either publicly or privately in the stated times, or out of them.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mhm/acts-6.html>)

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable** for doctrine, for **reproof (conviction: evidence)**, for CORRECTION, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be **perfect** **FRESH** [NOT stale {NOT worn out by USE}; having new vigor {STRENGTH}], **complete** [having no deficiency]], thoroughly furnished unto ALL good works.

2 Timothy 4:1-4, I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; **Preach the WORD**; be **INSTANT** in season, out of season; **reprove (convince, tell a fault)**, **REBUKE**, exhort with all **LONGSUFFERING** and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall **turn away their ears from the TRUTH**, and shall be turned unto **fables (fiction)**.

Instant defined 2186, be present (being in a certain place; opposed to absent); **assault** [AGGRESSIVE, attacking (*teachings and thinking*; *NOT people*) by words, arguments with a view to shake, impair (weaken) or overthrow].

Rebuke defined 2008, censure (find fault with and condemn as wrong; to blame; to express disapprobation (disapproval of), **rebuke** (utter words in ANGER).

Longsuffering defined 3115, longanimity, i.e. (objectively) forbearance (the act of forbearing or waiting; the exercise of patience, [**CONSTANCY in LABOR** or application; perseverance {persistence in anything undertaken} **OR (subjectively) fortitude** (1. power to resist attack; strength; firmness. [Obs.] 2. to bear PAIN or adversity [distress; misery; trouble; suffering; trial] without murmuring, depression, or DESPONDENCY; resolute [determined] endurance).

Despondency, loss of hope and cessation (stop, pause) of effort; discouragement; dejection [lowness of spirits occasioned by GRIEF] of the MIND.

Acts 6:5-6, *And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they CHOSE Stephen, a man FULL of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a PROSELYTE of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.*

NOTE: And the saying - "The word" - the COUNSEL, or command,

Nicolas a proselyte - A "proselyte" is one who is **converted** from one religion to another. The word does NOT mean HERE that he was a convert to "Christianity" - which was true - but that **he** had been **converted at Antioch from paganism to the Jewish religion**.

Of Antioch - This city, often mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 11:19-20, Acts 11:26; Acts 15:22, Acts 15:35; Galatians 2:11, etc.), was situated in Syria, on the river Orontes, and was formerly called "**Riblath**." It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is frequently mentioned in the Apocrypha. It was built by **Seleucus Nicanor**, b.c. 301, and was named "Antioch," in honor of his father **Antiochus**.In this place the disciples of Christ were first called "Christians," Acts 11:26.

And when they had prayed - Invoking in this manner the blessing of God to attend them in the discharge of the **DUTIES of their office**.

They laid their hands ... - Among the **Jews** it was customary to **lay hands on the head** of a person who was SET APART to any particular office, Numbers 27:18... Ordination has been uniformly performed in this way. See 1 Timothy 5:22. Though the seven deacons had been chosen by the church to this work, yet **they derived** their immediate **commission and authority from the apostles**.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/acts-6.html>)

Acts 6:7, *And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a GREAT company of the priests were obedient to the FAITH.*

NOTE: ...priests believed ... Only here is there such a declaration in the New Testament, and the importance of the truth revealed here is superlative (highest). First of all, here is the secret of all those episodes which took place in the homes of Pharisees, as given in Luke, there being no good reason to doubt that Luke **interviewed many** of those

converted priests; and this student views this as by far the most likely and reasonable explanation of chapters 10-19 in Luke's gospel. In the second place, the conversion of a vast number of Pharisees would account for the **savage persecution** of the **church** by that **same party**, which **persecution** Luke was in the act of narrating. The defection of many of their own group fired the HATRED of the remnant against the gospel.

(Source: <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/acts-6.html>)

Acts 6:8, And Stephen, FULL of faith and POWER (miraculous power), did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Thought 1. Now, it's around AD. 35, which is 4 years AFTER Stephen was made a deacon. (Source: *The Reese Chronological Bible*, pg. 1424) Notice, Stephen was full of FAITH and was also full of POWER. God inspired this to be written to reveal a truth to us a lot of Christians have yet to learn. The power of the Holy Ghost is NOT given, nor used to live right. Since he was BORN of God, he had the ability to live right! So, he resisted sin by reverence for God, and by faith and skill in using the scriptures that he understood.

1 John 5:4, For whatsoever is **BORN** of **God** overcometh the **world**: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH.

Thought 2. As you see, scripture did NOT say "FILLED by the Holy Spirit."

1 John 2:16, For all that is in the **world**, the lust of the flesh ...the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Thought 3. More proof of living holy by faith is seen in Jesus life. **Before** he was filled by the Holy Spirit at age thirty, he live holy by faith in God's word as he learned it. (Luke 3:22-23) And as he said, he was filled by the Spirit to WORK the WORKS of God, who sent him.

Luke 4:17-20, And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The **Spirit** of the Lord is **UPON me**, because he hath **anointed me** to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives ...recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister...

Thought 4. These truths also reveal there are TWO experiences with the Holy Spirit. First, like Jesus, we are BORN of God. And second, we're FILLED by Spirit to do the WORK. Paul was **BORN again** on the Damascus road, then **FILLED** by the Spirit, 3 days later.

Acts 1:8, But ye shall receive **POWER (force, miraculous power)**, after that the Holy Ghost is come UPON you: and ye shall be WITNESSES unto me ...

Acts 9:1-6 ...**Saul**, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus... And as he **journeyed (WALK)**, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he **fell** to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, **Who** art thou, **Lord (Sir)?** And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest... And he trembling and astonished said, **LORD**, what wilt thou have me **to do?**

Thought 5. This time he said "Lord" because he has believed on Jesus!

Acts 9:17, And **Ananias** went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, **Brother Saul**, (He was born again on the Damascus road) the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be **FILLED** with the **Holy Ghost**.