



**What might the responsibilities of the person on the door be?
Can you think of other examples?**

This is especially true in any job that requires working with people. As long as we see anything we do in church only for its physical side we will miss out. Nothing we do in the church should be done in our strength alone. We need to rely on the Holy Spirit. Our attitudes and decisions need to be Spirit-led. If they are not there is a real danger that individuals will start doing their own thing and the church will lose its harmony and direction. Every Job is a spiritual ministry.

Why did the Apostles need to be able to trust the seven?

Did they need to be able to trust their decision making?

The seven were given substantial authority, they needed to be spiritual and mature people.

2 Here was a job that was always going to grow or lead on to something else. Such jobs need people that will grow and expand through them. That will do what the seven did and mature to other things. All jobs in the church provide scope to start using spiritual gifts, to turn the job into an opportunity to expand personally.

Are there dead-end jobs in the church?

3 It is the natural progression of all things to slip from an organised state to one of disorder. For any church or individual maintaining a spirit-filled life is a challenge. The tendency is always to slip back to the normal, to human means, methods and wisdom. To lose our spiritual edge. If a church is to avoid this it needs to ensure that those who serve and those who lead are spiritually active.

What will happen if those in leadership neglect spiritual gifts?

How do we avoid slipping back this way?

! God wants us all to be filled with the Spirit. It is important to Him and He considers it as normal. We must all aspire to be full of the Spirit.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18

But eagerly desire the greater gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:31

▶ A Different Interpretation.
"It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, 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." Acts 6:2-4

This sounds like wise advice and good use of the Apostles time.

Would you agree?

But there is a problem.

Read Luke 22:27

Jesus describes Himself as the one who serves tables. The same Greek word for 'serve' and 'tables' are found in both verses.

Luke and Acts are two volumes of the same work, so you could read this as a veiled criticism of the Apostles who were unwilling to serve the way their Lord and master had.

How much should leaders be prepared to serve?

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Christian Church

Seven Servants



Read Acts 6:1-7

This study is built around a single question, why did the seven need to be full of the Spirit? First, we need to understand the background of this passage.

What was the problem the apostles were faced with?



On the surface this problem seems simple enough, a group of widows were being neglected. This represents the tip of the iceberg. The problem had the potential to be much larger and to split the fledgling church. Had this not been dealt with, it had the potential to split the church and seriously inhibit the spread of the gospel. The book of Acts records how the early church dealt with internal and external crises.

This was the second internal crisis.

What was the first?

If you do not know you will find the answer in Acts 5:1-11.

What external crisis did they face?



The Jewish population of the first century was split geographically into two groups, those who lived in Israel and spoke Hebrew, (NIV say Aramaic speaking, but the Greek specifies Hebrew, in other places the NIV acknowledges this in a footnote saying 'or possibly Hebrew!') and those who lived in the diaspora and spoke Greek. The diaspora Jews lived in the gentile countries of the Roman empire. As you read acts you will discover that in all but one city Paul visited he found a Synagogue and a substantial Jewish population. The differences between the groups were linguistic and cultural. They had their own Synagogues. Acts 6:9. The same situation exists within Judaism today.



Which of these two groups did Jesus minister to?

Which of these two groups did the disciples come from?

They were all Hebrews the only contact with Greeks is John 12:20-21.



The Greek-speaking Jews are often called Hellenists (Greek culture is known as Hellenist culture). It is understandable that many Jews born in gentile lands and serious about their faith should wish to visit Jerusalem or even live there. This issue was not just about widows but to do with two groups in the church one of whom felt neglected.

If you compare Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, you discover he held a harder line than is evident in the practice of the apostles. (eg attitude to the temple). Philo the Alexandrian writer and theologian who lived at the time of Jesus (20BC to 50AD) championed the Hellenistic approach to the bible, Nothing was taken literally, everything was an allegory and behind every action in the bible was some virtue the Romans and Greek philosophers would agree with.



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Which group did Paul come from?

By rights Paul should have been a Hellenist, he was born in the diaspora and spoke Greek. Yet he claims to be a Hebrew of Hebrews, and he was a Pharisee, a group known to despise Hellenists. He studied at the feet of Gamaliel the head of the Hillel Pharisees at the time. This means the division is not as simple as geographical. Culture and theology must play a part. Some have suggested that the Hellenists only spoke Greek. It also explains some of the genius of Paul, he could minister cross-culturally, He had a foot in both camps and could minister to both.



What do you need to be able to minister or serve cross-culturally?

It is known that many Greek widows moved to Jerusalem at the end of their lives, so their numbers were disproportionately large. These widows were supported from the funds held in the temple accumulated from the half-shekel temple tax, which all male Jews across the whole world paid. On declaring faith in Jesus, the widows were refused this help and were in danger of becoming destitute. The church themselves had to support them. This is why they had all things in common and why people like Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphire sold land to give the money to the Apostles. Acts 4:32-37, 2:44-45.

If the widows had continued to be neglected what might have resulted?

Do we face the same challenge of supporting people in need?

If this problem was between two groups in the church:



Who is in danger of missing out in churches like ours?

How do we ensure that we are inclusive?

How do we make sure everyone is treated equally?



The church might have split with the two sides hostile to each other. Interestingly, it was the Greek Jews who were much more aggressive in dispersing the gospel. Had this wing of the church floundered the spread of the gospel would have slowed dramatically. It is also clear that the Temple authorities and the Sanhedrin were much more tolerant of the Hebrew believers than the Greeks. In Acts 8:1 when it says all except the apostles were scattered, most commentators believed it was the Greek church that was expelled while the Hebrew Church (ie the apostles) was largely untouched.

Why do you think the Hellenist Jews were more aggressive in spreading the Gospel?



Who did the apostles blame?

What did the apostles attribute their failure to?

What did they say they needed to concentrate on?

What does this tell us about the duties of a Pastor?

What does this tell us about delegation?

How did the disciples solve the problem?

They delegated the job and along with it the resources and authority to do it.

What happens if you only delegate the job?

The church effectively set up two streams, Hebrew and Greek.



Do you think this was an ideal situation?

What were the advantages of this course of action?

What were the dangers?

How should we treat cultural divisions in the church?



It is always best when a church reflects the cultural mix of the community of which it is a part. Sometimes there is a need for single culture churches, this may be because of

language issues or because of a lack of trust between different groups. At times a culture might need to be protected. These churches can grow well. People like to be around others with whom they have the most in common. This is especially true of people coming to church for the first time. But it is always best when different kinds of believers worship together. This is how it will be in Heaven and it pleases God now.

If this is true, how can we ensure we stay one body not two?



Did the Apostles dictate a solution or propose a solution?

Who selected the seven?

Who appointed them?

What criteria were they to meet?



The church as a whole picked the people, but the apostles endorsed them. It is clear from their names that they were all from the Hellenistic community. They needed to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.



What job were the seven to do?

What did they end up doing?

The seven's job was to wait on tables, to provide food for the widows and that is all! They ended up as the spiritual leaders of the Greek community. Stephen proclaimed the gospel, Philip became an evangelist. We have no idea whether they were already in this position when the Apostles laid hands on them or they grew into this position with time. We do not even know whether the apostles intended them just to serve tables or whether the apostles anticipated that they would become spiritual leaders as well. Laying on of hands in this context means being ordained, or set apart for a task. Acts 13:3, 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:22



One of the words used of the function of the twelve is *diakonia* it is from this family of words that we get deacon, someone who serves the church physical or in financial management. The Apostles dealt with this problem admirably. Their action not only solved an immediate problem it prepared the ground for the church to grow further. This is a practical example of a word of wisdom, 1 Corinthians 12:8, guidance by the Spirit of the right action to take.



if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:8

What does this mean for you?

The word deacon in modern church life is used to describe, someone who does physical jobs in the church, greets people on the door, takes up the offering, unlocks the building and tidying up. In the bible, even Jesus is described as a deacon, as is Paul.



The big question.

If all they were doing was distributing food why did they need to be filled with the Spirit? It's obvious why they needed wisdom. (Why?) But why did a physical job require spiritual qualifications?

We assume that most of the people in the early church were filled with the Holy Spirit, the implication is that these were people where the Spirit was very evident in their lives, they 'moved in the gifts'.

What do you think, why did they need to be full of the Spirit?



No job in the church is just physical. All jobs have a spiritual aspect.

Do you think the person in a church who does the accounts is responsible to pray for the finances?