

October 30, 2011

Willow Park South Small Group Questions *Acts 6:1-7*

- Please read *Acts 6:1-7* together at the beginning of your small group meeting.

As the early church began to grow and “the disciples were increasing in number”, we see a conflict arise between the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) and the Hebrews (Hebrew- or Aramaic-speaking Jews) over the fact that the church failed to take care of the Hellenist widows. Because of the rapid growth of the church and the diversity among the believers, there was cultural tension building which threatened their unity.

What was the Apostles response to this problem?

- The Apostles appointed 7 Hellenist disciples (we know they were Hellenists from their Greek names) to be in charge of the daily distribution.

Why do you think the Apostles choose Hellenist disciples to distribute the goods to those who were being neglected?

In appointing people to distribute food, the apostles sought people who were full of good repute, full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom. Why were these qualities sought, and what does this mean for churches today when appointing people for various tasks?

The twelve apostles announced that they would not serve tables but devote themselves to the word and prayer. Was serving tables too low of a task for them? If not, why did they distance themselves from this task?

Having chosen seven to serve tables, the apostle's laid hands on them and prayed. What is the significance of the act of praying and laying hands on those who were chosen?

What does Luke, the author of acts, mean when he writes that “*the word of God continued to increase*” (Acts 6:7 ESV)? How does this relate to our purpose at Willow Park South?

James, Jesus' brother, who was no doubt in the church during this time, wrote some years later “*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world*” (James 1:27 ESV).

How does the ‘Child of Mine’ ministry in India seek to obey James’ challenge for us?

As a church, what can we do to help the “Child of Mine” ministry provide neglected orphans the safety, education and skills needed to grow up and live fruitful lives?

How is the word of God continuing to increase through the ‘Child of Mine’ ministry?

It is easy for us to get caught up in guilt and help those in need out of a conscience-stricken motivation. But the Bible does not call us to be motivated by guilt, rather, it calls for a motivation of compassion and joy in seeking opportunities to help. The only way to obtain this attitude is by understanding that Christ himself gave up the comfort and joys of heaven and became poor and afflicted for each one of us. He lived the life we should have lived, he died the death that we deserved to die, and he rose from death foreshadowing how we too will rise and experience the joys of heaven with him forever. As God has been generous in helping us who are spiritual beggars, be generous as you help those who are physically in need.