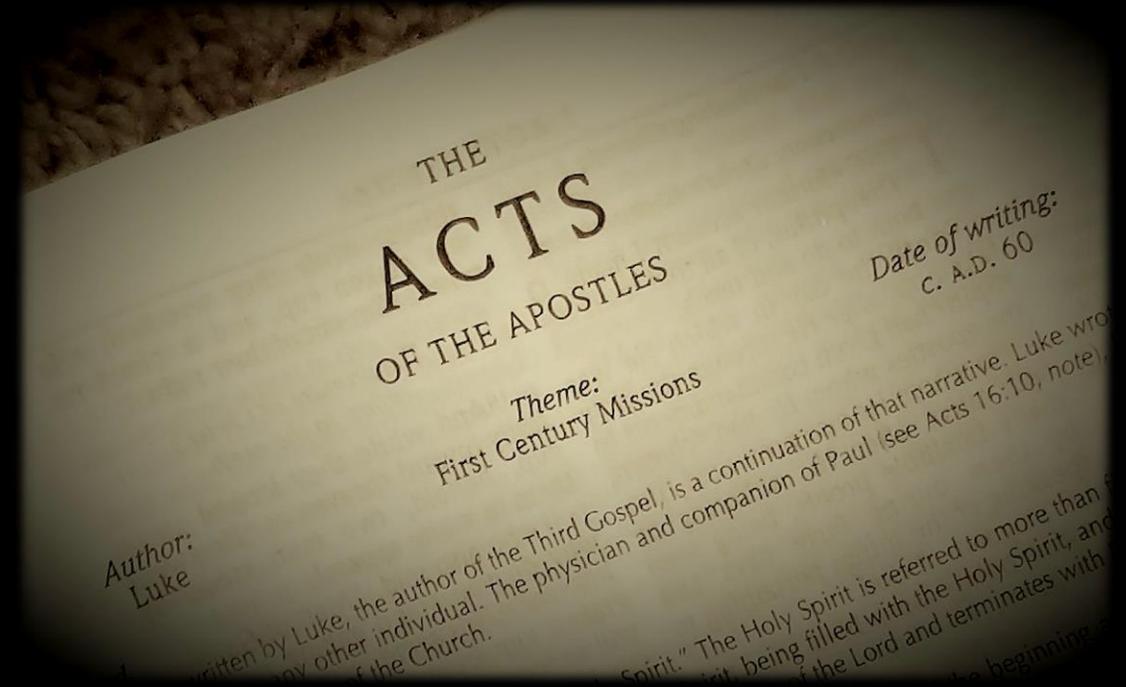


# Verse by Verse

## Acts 6



# Previously in Acts

## Previously in Acts

- Satan's first strategy was to have the enemies of the church **attack it straightforwardly**.
- This can sometimes cause **discouragement**, but in the case of the apostles it did not.
- He used a different method when he tried to **corrupt the church from within**.
- This was seen in the case of **Ananias and Sapphira**.

# Acts 6 Introduction

## Acts 6 Introduction

- Another trick up Satan's sleeve, which he pulls out in **Chapter 6** is a combination of **division** and **distraction**.
- He tries to divide the church by creating a kind of **cultural division**.
- Within this one issue is the second issue of **distracting the apostles** from their primary calling.

# Acts 6 Introduction

- Satan's tactics never really change all that much.
- The combination of strategies he employs in the book of **Acts** are much like the tactics he still uses today.
  - Opposition
  - Corruption
  - Division
  - Distraction

# Acts 6 Introduction

- Three of the four appear here in **Acts 6**.
  - Opposition
  - Corruption
  - Division
  - Distraction

# Acts 6    Key Verse

## Acts 6    Key Verse

- Acts 6:7 (ESV)

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

# Acts 6 Outline

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1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7
2. Accusing Stephen 6:8-15

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

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- Acts 6:1 (NASB)

Now at this time, as the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint developed *on the part of* the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.

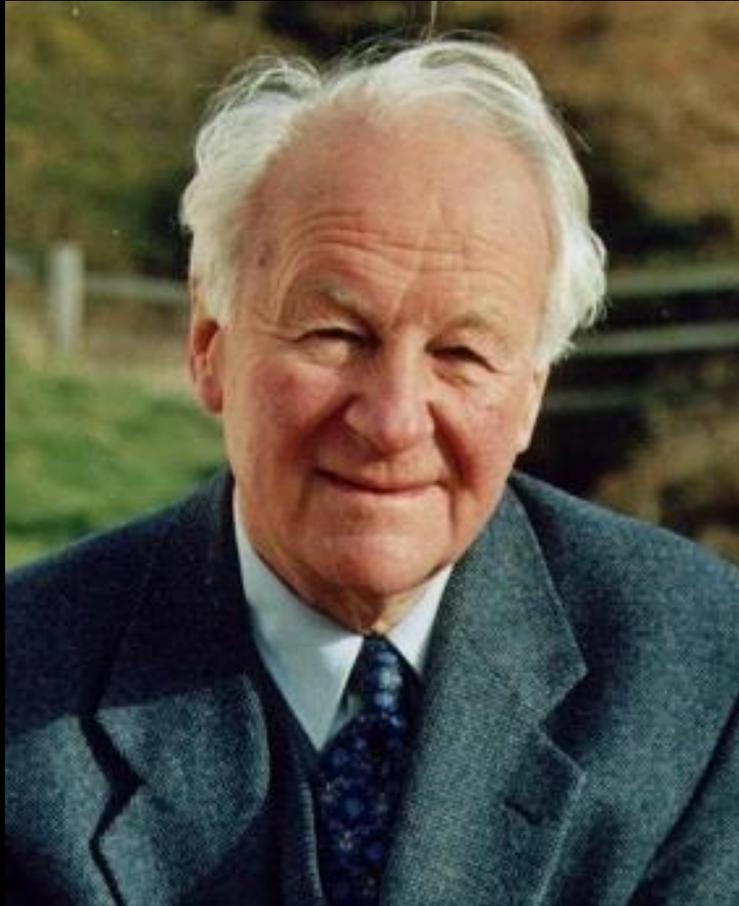
# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- The Hellenistic Jews were Greek-speaking and were probably immigrants to Jerusalem.
- They were Jews but outsiders in language and culture.
- The native Hebrews grew up in the land of Israel and were, therefore, culturally more Middle-Eastern.
- Israel is still diverse culturally with Ethiopian, American and especially Russian Jews now there.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- The problem was probably accidental.
- There is no reason to fault the apostles for somehow denying the Greek-speaking widows.
- There was more to the problem than meets the eye, however, and something needed to change.

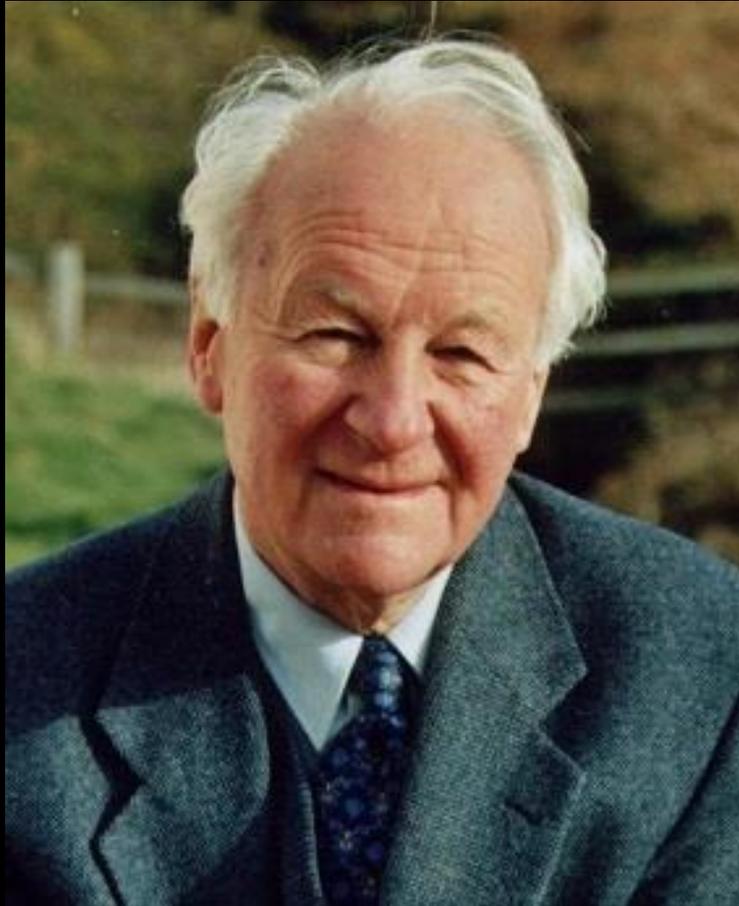
# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7



*The issue was more ... than one of cultural tension. The apostles discerned a deeper problem, namely that social administration (both organizing the distribution and settling the complaint) ...*

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7



*... was threatening to occupy all their time and so inhibit them from the work which Christ had specifically entrusted to them, namely preaching and teaching.<sup>1</sup>*

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

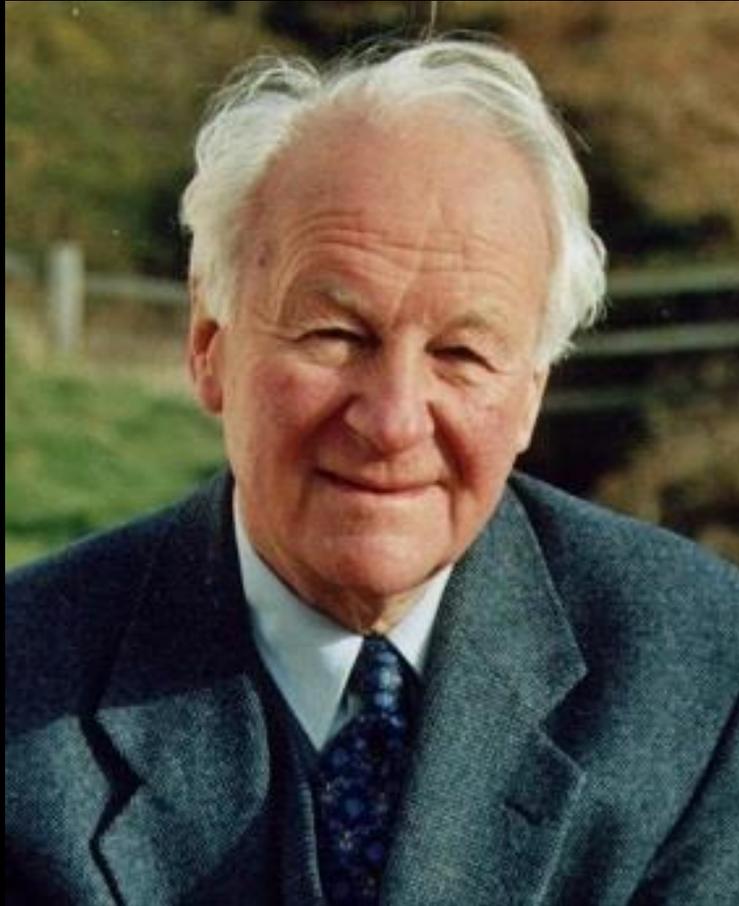
# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- **Moses** had to deal with a similar problem in **Numbers 11:16-17**.
- By ruling over all Israel personally, the prophet was getting bogged down with low-level disputes.
- To deal with the administrative backlog, he appointed **seventy elders** to help ease the burden.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- The apostles solve their problem in a similar way, by adding seven others to take on responsibilities.
- It is important that we do not view the work of one group as somehow better than the other.
- This is more a case of specialization than superiority.

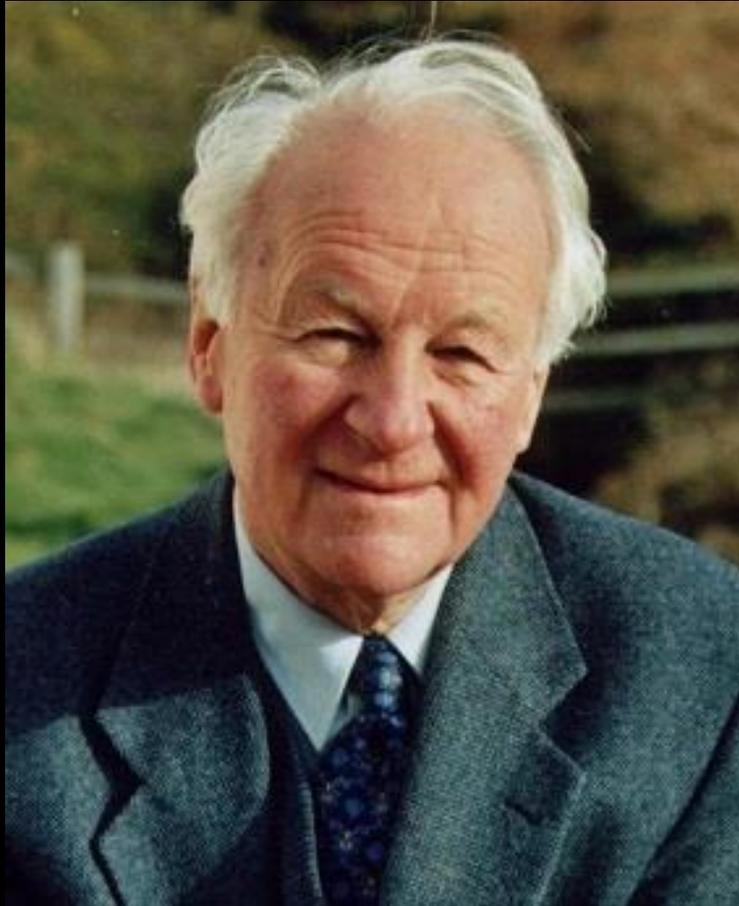
# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7



*It is surely deliberate that the work of the Twelve and the work of the Seven are alike called diakonia (1, 4), 'ministry' or 'service' ... Neither ministry is superior to the other ...*

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7



*... Both require spiritual people, 'full of the Spirit', to exercise them ... The only difference between them lies in the form the ministry takes, requiring different gifts and different callings. <sup>2</sup>*

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- 6:3 In fact, three characteristics were required of those who would oversee the distribution of food.
  1. Good repute – or a good reputation
  2. Full of the Spirit
  3. Full of wisdom
- Every part of the work of the ministry requires spiritual qualifications in those who perform it.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- 6:4 The apostles were now able to stay focused on their main areas of ministry.
  1. Prayer – probably both public and private.
  2. The Ministry of the Word – which is the valuable form of “service” that they performed.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- 6:5-6 All of the Seven have Greek names, which many mean they were from the Hellenistic group.
- Or maybe not – many Jews at this time used a Hebrew name as well as a name that was Greek or Latin.
- We see this in Simon Peter or Saul of Tarsus, who is also called Paul the apostle.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- 6:7 The end result was blessing upon the ministry.
- There are several of these markers throughout the book of Acts.
- For example, Acts 12:24 (ESV)

But the word of God increased and multiplied.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

- 6:7 a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
- The ruling party of priests continued to oppose the gospel, but that was clearly not true of all priests.
- Some of the rank and file among the priesthood have by this point had a change of heart.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

## A Multicultural Church:

- Right from the start, though the church was Jewish, it was always multicultural.
- Think back to **Acts 2** and the different languages.
- This model is visible through **Acts** and the **Epistles**.
- The **multi-ethnic or multi-cultural model** is the most biblical model for most American churches to imitate.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

## The Separation of Duties

- Eventually, this separation of duties developed into the difference later referred to as elders and deacons.
- The work of elders mostly in the area of preaching, teaching and governing the church.
- The work of the deacons was in the area of serving.
- They were the main group of worker bees and administrators of the church.

# 1. Choosing the Seven 6:1-7

## The Separation of Duties

- These boundaries were not very strict in those days, nor are they always strict even today.
- This is obvious immediately in the story of [Stephen](#).

## 2. Accusing Stephen 6:8-15

## 2. Accusing Stephen 6:8-15

- **6:8** It is obvious from this one verse that Stephen did more than serve tables.
- Sometimes the most effective ministry is carried out by those who do not have the most visible positions.
- **Personal Example:** John Schultz, Jason's dad, who was a mentor of mine in San Diego.

## 2. Accusing Stephen 6:8-15

- 6:9 Synagogue of the Freedmen
- This was a congregation started by freed slaves and/or their descendants.
- Gaining their freedom may have led them to return to the land from these other areas of the empire.

## 2. Accusing Stephen 6:8-15

- 6:10-14 A Very Typical Progression
- When the opponents of the gospel cannot win simply by means of argument, they often raise the stakes.
- Argument turns into accusation, which then turns into some kind of official opposition.
- Jesus faced the same thing leading to the cross.

## 2. Accusing Stephen 6:8-15

- 6:15 – 7:1 To be continued ...

# Acts 6    What We Just Read

# Acts 6    What We Just Read

1. Choosing the Seven    6:1-7
2. Accusing Stephen    6:8-15

# Acts 6    Key Verse

## Acts 6    Key Verse

- Acts 6:7 (ESV)

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

# Acts 6    Key Points

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1. The enemy only has a few tactics to use.
  - Most of what he does to stop the gospel will be a sort of variation on one of these themes.
    - Opposition
    - Corruption
    - Division (which easily leads to)
    - Distraction

## Acts 6    Key Points

2. For a church to work together well, we need to think in terms of a body having different parts.
  - We can also think of a team, where the different positions are covered by different players.
  - One is not better than another, and roles can sometimes overlap.
  - No one person or one type of person can do it all.

## Acts 6    Key Points

3. The primary biblical model we see in Acts and the Epistles is for **a multicultural church**.
  - In a multicultural place like the USA, this is a model we can use.
  - Rather than divide by race, ethnicity or class, we grow personally by learning to work together.
  - It may not be easy, so we should be aware of the most common obstacles.

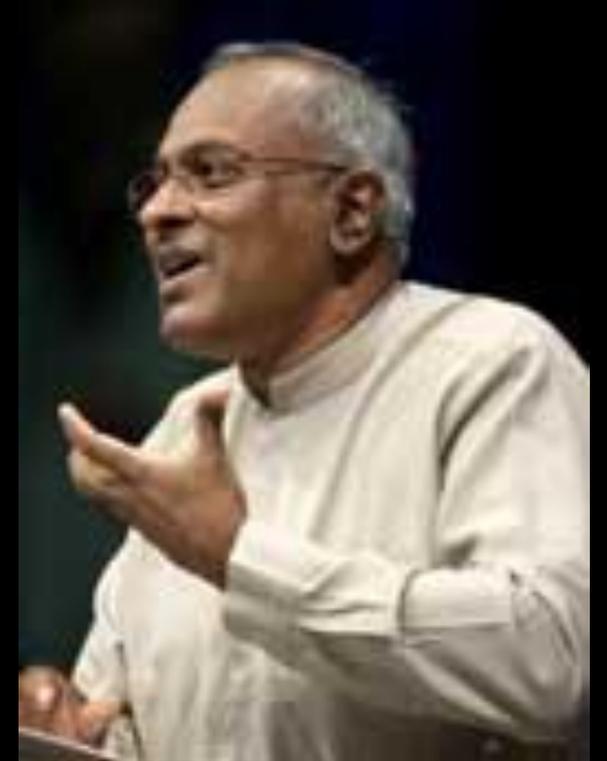
## Acts 6 Key Points

We will face three major obstacles if we try to have multicultural churches.

(1) Today's pragmatism always looks at success in terms of measurable results.

- Unfortunately numerical growth is not quick and easy using this model.

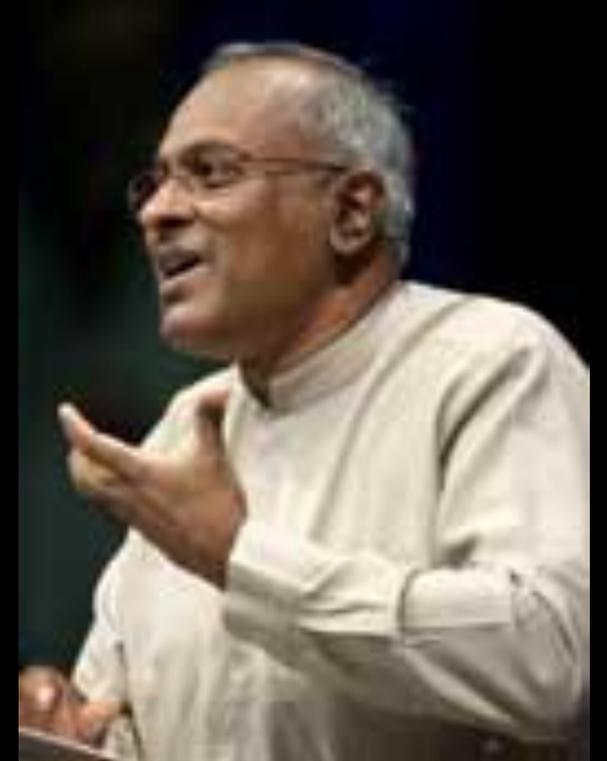
– *Ajith Fernando,  
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



## Acts 6 Key Points

(2) Today's society also tries hard to avoid pain and unpleasantness, and multicultural churches usually experience pain as a result of misunderstandings and cultural insensitivity.

– *Ajith Fernando,  
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*

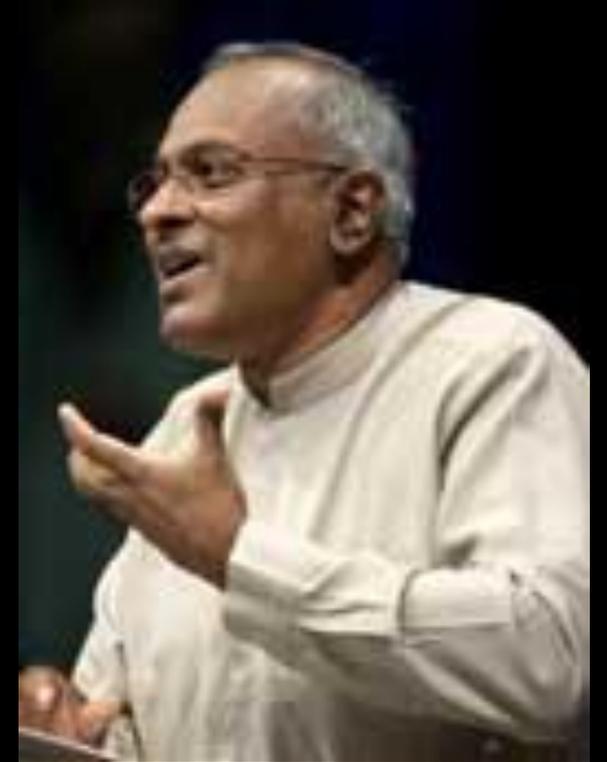


## Acts 6 Key Points

(3) Established Christians are often unwilling to change practices in their church in order to welcome converts.

- Openness to change in styles and methods can be perfectly consistent with faithfulness to God's word.

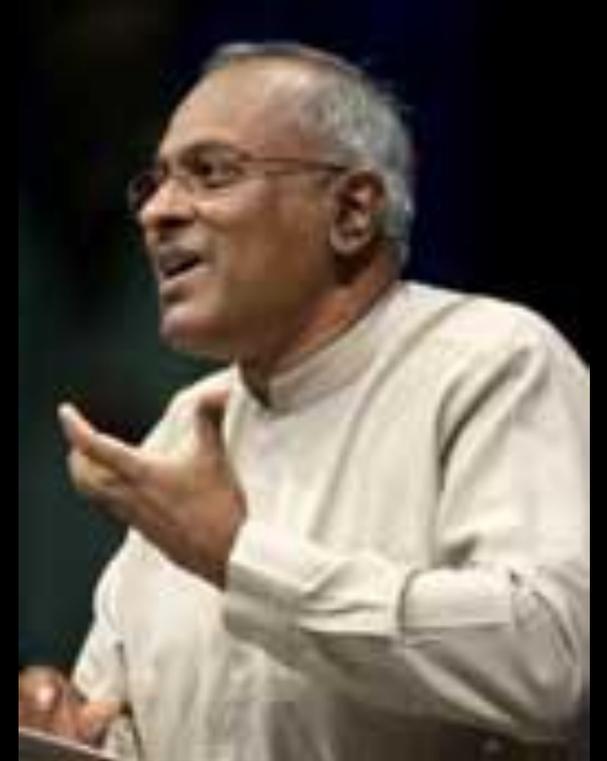
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## Acts 6    Key Points

*In other words, we need to explore how best to apply the biblical principle of the unity of the body amidst diversity ... My wife and I cherish the enrichment that has come to us through having as close brothers and sisters people who are so culturally different from us.*

*– Ajith Fernando,  
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



# Acts 6    A Prayer

# Acts 6    A Prayer

- Father in heaven,
- When Jesus came to this earth, the enemy made use of several different ways to oppose his ministry.
- He was belittled, ignored and sometimes faced angry and even violent opposition.
- Help us to be ready to deal with all of his tactics, including corruption, division and distraction when these things come.

## Acts 6    A Prayer

- We also pray that you would help us to see our own gifts so that we can use them to faithfully serve.
- If there is a way we can support someone else in using the gifts you have given them, we ask that you show us how and when to give them some encouraging words or help them in some tangible way.

## Acts 6 A Prayer

- Finally, we pray that you would show us how to create unity in the midst of diversity. Make us a church that is even more diverse than we presently are.
- At the same time show us how to love, serve and care for those who are different from us, in order to show them the love of Jesus.
- In Christ,
- Amen

## Acts 6    References

1. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Acts: the Spirit, the church & the world* (p. 121). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
2. Stott, 122
3. Fernando, A. (1998). *Acts* (p. 237). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.