

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for "the big question."*

Read Acts 6:1-7 aloud.

1. What complaint arose at the beginning of this story?

Who were the groups involved in this conflict?

Jews from different cultures. One group had adopted the customs of the Greek-speaking world, and they felt like their widows were being neglected. A third group involved in the conflict was the 12 apostles – they were caught in the middle.

How valid was this complaint?

Valid enough that the apostles chose to respond.

2. What are some possible ways to respond when you are caught between warring factions like the apostles were?

How did the apostles respond?

They suggested a plan, and they left it to the group with the complaint to work out the details.

Why didn't the apostles take care of the widows? How much was this approach a departure from the way Jesus touched the crowds?

How many OT names (Isaac, Joshua, -iah, -el, etc.) do you see among these seven men? What does that tell you?

The Greek Christians chose Greek men to care for Greek widows.

Why is it wise to let people solve their own problems whenever possible?

3. How did this conflict affect the health of the church?

How can conflict be productive?

If it is managed well, conflict usually makes a group stronger because it clarifies expectations.

When you face conflict, what helps produce a good outcome?

4. How is life different in a 1200-member church vs. a 200-member church? How might it be different in a 2000-member church?

Would you say that smaller churches are more loving?

There is greater name recognition, but not necessarily more love. You can find churches of all sizes who treat one another with the love of Christ. And you can find churches of all sizes who gossip, bicker and backstab.

What should we expect at our church as far as everybody knowing our names? What percentage of the congregation do you know? What percentage of the congregation should you know?

What should we expect at our church as far as leaders knowing everyone's name? What does it say about an elder's shepherding of the flock if he cannot recall a member's name?

5. How well does the development of small groups in our congregation match up with Acts 6?

Some people worry that small groups could lead to a church split. How would you say LIFE groups have affected the sense of unity and love in our congregation?

Why is it important to develop more small groups?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, this is it. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay to pass, but even the quiet people deserve a chance to respond.*

Who watches out for you? If you had an emergency in the middle of the night, who would you call first?

Who are you watching out for? Would call you with an emergency in the middle of the night?

Resources

Bible notes

- We often refer to these seven men as deacons, but the term does not appear in Acts 6. They filled a role similar to ministry leaders today – they took the lead in a significant ministry.
- If you read the next three chapters, the seven men got to work – teaching and preaching! That doesn't mean they neglected the widows. Rather, it illustrates the principle of the talents – if you are faithful in one task, you will soon be given another task with greater influence.

Kid-friendly activity...kids & adults growing together.
Celebrate the good things God has done this last week!

Play the “I don't like” game...

Go around the circle. Each person use a whiny, grumbly voice and say something you don't like. (“I don't like green beans, yard work, bedtime, etc.)

How does it make you feel to speak in a grumbly voice?

What should you do when you don't like something?

Sometimes adults don't like what happens. Here's a good example of what to do. Read Acts 6:1-7 aloud.

What was the problem in this story?

How did the people who were unhappy deal with it?

How did the church solve this problem?

What can we learn from this story about dealing with things we don't like?

Play the nice game...

Each person say one thing they like about someone else in the group. When your name is called, you go next at saying something nice. Continue indefinitely!



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LIFE Group Guide

Acts 6 – Loving through conflict

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this discussion: **treating one another right even when we have conflicts.**

Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples – if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). It's easy to love peers who are kind and agreeable. Love is tested, though, when you are with people who are different and who complain about you and your efforts.

In Acts 6, the first disciples passed the test. They managed a conflict in a way that increased, rather than threatened, their love for one another.

Leadership tip: The calendar for the next two meetings is difficult. On Aug. 30, our congregation and others will host Fred Gray for a joint evening service and meal. The following week (Sept. 6) is also LG, and it's the weekend of Labor Day. Meet both weekends if possible. Even with a small crowd, being together is a blessing.

At times like this, we can see how nice it would be if LIFE groups met every week and we gathered at the building only for special occasions (like the joint service). But a number of members value an evening worship service, so for the sake of unity (the point of this guide) we need to support them. Please join me in praying for LIFE groups to make the most of every opportunity – we fill a vital role in God's work through College Hills.

I. Relate *Use a few of these to introduce the theme and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage individuals through these questions.*

- ❖ What is something you are looking forward to?
- ❖ Who is an older person you care for?
- ❖ When are you likely to experience conflict in a typical week?