



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N13 March 29, 2026

## POWER AND PURPOSE

“Shared Leadership, Expanding Mission”

Acts 6:1-7

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Spiritual Gifts

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

*“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith.”*

**Romans 12:4-6**



What does gifted ministry look like?

Spiritual formation, discipleship, and sanctification are all terms we use to refer to the process we go through to become like Jesus (Ro 8:29). The process is both *intentional* and *incidental*. The intentional aspect entails the Spirit's use of deliberate spiritual practices like worship, Bible study and meditation, prayer, solitude and silence to transform us. The incidental aspect entails his use of the unforeseen circumstances and unscripted encounters in life like financial reversals, casual conversations, unexpected conflict – the “I-didn't-see-that-coming” events in life – to transform us. Incidental transformation often involves the influence of gifted people in our lives. Spiritual gifts are abilities the Holy Spirit adds to our natural giftedness following salvation intended for the building up of the body of Christ.

Pastor Toney Upton comments further on the *what, how, and why* of spiritual gifts:

#### What Are the Gifts?

There are a few biblical texts that offer lists of spiritual gifts. First Corinthians 12 is a great beginning place. Among others, it includes the gifts of being apostles, teachers, prophets, helpers, and organizers. Another listing in Romans 12 includes: faith, serving, encouragement, generosity, leadership, and kindness. This isn't an exhaustive list. Take some time to do biblical digging and study.

#### How Do I Discover My Spiritual Gift?

That's a great question. Every Christ-follower should have a good sense of what their spiritual gift is. You can Google “spiritual gifts test.” You'll find several that are free and reliable. Take one or two. You can also explore your giftings and fit in the context of a group setting. Exploring and sharing these discoveries in the context of a trusting and helpful small

group will bring you great encouragement, affirmation, and accountability.

#### Why Has God Given Me a Spiritual Gift?

The Church, made up of Christ-followers both local and global, is described in Scripture as a body. “The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ... All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12). You are a unique part of this body of Christ. No one can do what you are designed to do in the body. So you have a purpose and a calling in God's work in the world and your spiritual gift is a part of your equipping. First Peter 4 states we “manage them (our gifts) well so that God's generosity can flow through you.” It's worth noting that God is the one who determines which gift(s) you receive. You do not pick your spiritual gift. But what you'll find is that your giftings are custom fitted to you.

#### Prayer

Father, I thank you that you call me your son/daughter. You have adopted me and I belong to you. And not only that, you have given me a place in your plans. You have ideas for me. Even though you didn't need me, you have included me. Thank you for such a precious love. Help me to discover the unique ways that you have gifted me. May I spend myself for your glory. As 1 Peter 4:11 says, may I “do it will all the strength and energy God supplies. Then everything [I] do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever. Amen.” ([nextstepdisciple.org/article/spiritual-gifts](http://nextstepdisciple.org/article/spiritual-gifts))

# 1

## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

### Read Acts 6:1-7

1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 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.

### Read another translation

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 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 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. (NIV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "complaint" in v. 1.
- Circle "Hellenists" and "Hebrews" in v. 1.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 1.
- Bracket "daily distribution" in v. 1.
- Bracket "serve tables" in v. 2.
- Underline "of good repute" in v. 3.
- Highlight "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" in v. 3.
- Circle "Stephen" in v. 5.
- Highlight "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" in v. 5.
- Underline "a proselyte of Antioch" in v. 5.
- Bracket "laid their hands on them" in v. 6.
- In the margin next to v. 7 write "See 1:8; cf., other progress reports 2:47; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:29; 28:30, 31."

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Before the responsibility was turned over to seven chosen men, who was apparently responsible for the daily distribution of food to widows?
2. The widows of Hellenist Jews were being neglected. Explain the seriousness of the problem.
3. How come the Twelve turned the problem over to *the disciples* to solve?
4. Explain how the disciples would have known who was “full of the Spirit and wisdom.”
5. Do you think the men whom the disciples chose had a choice in the matter? Explain.
6. All of the men chosen had Greek names. What does that suggest to you and why does it matter?
7. Stephen was “*full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.*” Put what that means in your own words.
8. What *purpose* did the laying on of the apostles’ hands serve in this situation?
9. Relate verse 7 to verses 1-6.
10. **Discussion:** Some passages in the book of Acts are *descriptive*; some are *prescriptive*. Talk about which you think 6:1-7 is.

### Commentary On The Text

Acts 6:1-7 describes a problem that developed in the Jerusalem church—maybe within five years or so after Pentecost (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 178)—and how the Twelve solved it. It was a problem most churches would welcome because it resulted from the congregation’s rapid growth. People were responding to the gospel, which was being proclaimed every day in the temple courts and from house to house (5:42).

“When the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food” (v. 1). Such flagrant discrimination had to be addressed quickly because it undermined the unity of “heart and mind” (4:32) enjoyed by the congregation. One commentator explains: “The values emphasized in previous descriptions of the Jerusalem church show that it is an important problem. In 4:32, 34 we were told that the church’s ‘heart and soul were one,’ and ‘there was no needy person among them’ because property owners were willing to sell their goods and share. Now we hear of a ‘complaint’ or ‘grumbling’ (6:1) that disturbs the church’s unity. The threat to unity appears precisely in the area of the church’s life where unity had been most clearly demonstrated; the sharing of wealth with the needy” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2:80).

But rather than neglect the ministry of the word to remain in charge of benevolence, the Twelve gather all the disciples together and tell *them* to select seven spiritual men who are competent to take over the responsibility. And the disciples do just that. As directed by the apostles, the congregation selects seven men who are “full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (v. 3)—most if not all of whom are Hellenists—who are able to address the concerns of the overlooked widows. Hellenists are chosen to address a Hellenist complaint—a good plan. The fact that the men are “full of the Spirit and of wisdom” suggests that their lives are marked by the influence of the Spirit and the exercise of wisdom, which means they would have the discernment and practical know-how to manage charitable funds. In light of the congregants’ different languages, Greek versus Hebrew (or its contemporary vernacular equivalent, Aramaic) one commentator speculates the seven may have been leaders of seven Hellenist house churches in Jerusalem (see James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 84). Perhaps the seven followed a Jewish practice familiar to them. Every Friday the Jews distributed enough money for fourteen meals to their resident needy. There was also a daily distribution to nonresidents and transients that consisted of food and drink, which was delivered house to house wherever the needy were residing. The Christian practice apparently reflected *both* elements. Like the second it was daily; like the first it was for resident members (see Polhill, 180).

Two of the men, Stephen, who is “full of faith and of the Holy Spirit,” and Philip play continuing roles in Acts. Understandably, this incident prepares us for Stephen’s speech and

martyrdom in Acts 7 and for Philip’s mission in Acts 8. Once the men are selected, the apostles “laid their hands on them” in recognition of their selection for the task. This is neither an example of our current practice of ordination nor an explanation of the origin of the diaconate. “The word deacon’ (*diakonos*) never occurs in the passage. The word ministry’ (*diakonia*) does occur several times, but it is applied to both the ministry of the daily distribution (v. 2) and the ministry of the word, the apostolic witness (v. 4). In fact, the word ‘deacon’ never occurs in Acts” (Polhill, 182). To “wait on tables” (v. 2) is most likely a figurative expression referring to the overall responsibility for the food distribution program, which probably involved something more than and other than actually serving as “waiters.”

And what was the result? According to verse 7, “the word of God spread. The number of disciples increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” Somewhat ironically, growth had threatened the unity of the body, but when the threat is addressed and unity is maintained, the body continues to grow. The Twelve act “with dispatch to solve the problem and restore unity. In doing so, they show a willingness to share community leadership with others and sensitivity to the feelings of all parties, arriving at a solution satisfactory to all” (80). They don’t try to do it all; they involve gifted volunteers in a critical ministry. “The early church had problems but, according to Acts, it also had leaders who moved swiftly to ward off corruption and find solutions to internal conflicts, supported by people who listened to each other with open minds and responded with good will” (Tannehill, 81).

So what’s the point of the narrative? It *describes* a practical problem that threatened the unity of the community—discrimination against some of its members—and how the apostles directed the disciples to solve it—delegate the responsibility for its resolution to gifted men “full of the Spirit and wisdom.” It *introduces* two characters, Stephen and Philip, who play important roles in subsequent chapters of the narrative. It *illustrates* how the body is to function as various gifted members share in ministry to one another and later to the outside world, indicating that ministry must extend beyond those who are called primarily to preach. One commentator writes: “In sum, this unit *shows* the community using its own people to solve its own problems. The community hears the complaint, owns up to the problem, allows those closest to it to solve it, delegates the authority to get it done, and then goes to work. This issue is not denied or papered over but confronted direct as a community concern” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 262). Luke shows, perhaps *implicitly* commends, the actions of the disciples, suggesting that disciples would do well to behave likewise today, but it does not prescribe. It does not prescribe one solution for every possible church problem, neither does it prescribe the selection of a standing board of deacons in every church.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *Hellenists . . . Hebrews* Hebraic Jews were for the most part natives of Palestine who spoke Aramaic in addition to Greek and used the Hebrew Scriptures. Hellenistic Jews were for the most part from outside of Palestine; they spoke Greek and used the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. On “Hellenistic Jews” one author writes, “We should very likely think of this element within the early church along the lines of ‘Hellenized Jewish Christians’ or ‘Grecian Jewish believers’ – that is, as Jews living in Jerusalem who had come from the Diaspora and were under some suspicion by reason of their place of birth, their speech, or both, of being more Grecian than Hebraic in their attitudes and outlook but who, since coming to Jerusalem, had become Christians. Many of them, no doubt, had originally returned to the homeland out of religious ardor and today would be called Zionists” (Richard N. Longenecker, “Acts” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 329). “‘Hellenists’ would seem to indicate Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora who were living in Jerusalem . . . That there would have been many such Diaspora converts in the Jerusalem Christian community is altogether likely, given the large number of them who were present at Pentecost (2:5-11) . . . Diaspora Jews often moved to Jerusalem in their twilight years to die in the holy city. When the men died, their widows were left far from their former home and family to care for them and were thus particularly in need of charity. Many of them may have been attracted to the Christian community precisely because of its concern for the material needs of its members” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 177, 79)

v. 1 *complaint* Their complaint may have been but the tip of a grievances iceberg. Cultural prejudices and resentments of other kinds may have heightened tensions between the two groups—called by one commentator not “a breach or separation in the total Christian community—only a sort of ‘distancing’ created by natural linguistic and cultural differences” (Polhill, 179). “The linguistic and social differences produced cultural differences that created a division in the church . . . that the community now recognizes and works swiftly to quell” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 258).

v. 1 *daily distribution* Cf. “of food” (NIV). “The daily distribution (*kathēmerinē*) or ministry (*diakonia*) involves necessary food and probably some clothing and possibly necessary money (Le Cornu and Shulam 2003; 309; see also p. 303 on how widows were cared for)” (Bock, 257). “Judaism had a system for the distribution of food and supplies to the poor, both to the

wandering pauper and to those living in Jerusalem itself (cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, pp. 126-34). There were also special religious communities (like the Pharisees and the Essenes) that had their own agents in every city to provide their members ‘a social service somewhere between the private and public services’ (ibid., p. 130). The early Christian community at Jerusalem also expressed its spiritual unity in communal sharing of possessions and in charitable acts (cf. 2:44-45; 4:32-5:11). Apparently with the ‘increasing’ number of believers and with the passing of time, the number of Hellenistic widows dependent on relief from the church became disproportionately large. Many pious Jews of the Diaspora had moved to Jerusalem in their later years in order to be buried near it, and their widows would have had no relatives near at hand to care for them as would the widows of the long-time residents. Nor as they became Christians would the ‘poor baskets’ of the national system of relief be readily available to them” (Longenecker, 330).

v. 3 *of good repute* “Their qualifications have two major components: that they be spiritual men, and that their character be well accepted by others” (Bock, 260).

v. 3 *full of* To be “full of” something is to be characterized by it. To be “full of the Spirit” means to live in accord with the Spirit, or be spiritual. To be “full of wisdom” means to live skillfully, or be competent.

v. 5 *Stephen* That all seven men had Greek names does not necessarily mean they were all Hellenistic Jews; Palestinian Jews sometimes had Greek names. But the fact that Nicolaus was a “proselyte,” or “convert to Judaism” (NIV), suggests that most if not all of them were.

v. 6 *these* Often called the first “deacons,” although the Greek word *diakonos* (“deacon”) does not appear in the passage. However, the related words *diakonia* (“distribution,” v. 1) and *diakoneō* (“ministry,” v. 4) do appear. It seems the ministry functioned long before deacon became viewed as an office (Longenecker, 331).

v. 6 *laid their hands* The laying on of hands was used in the OT in connection with “the bestowal of a blessing (cf. Gen 48:13ff.), to express identification, as when the sacrificer laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial victim (cf. Lev. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4; 16:21 etc.), for commissioning a successor (cf. Num 27:23) and the like” (F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT, 130). In the last case it implied the conferral of authority

# 4

## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Partner in the ministry of your church using your spiritual gifts, because when believers do, issues in the church can be resolved, and the needs of its members can be met.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## PARENT CONNECTION

Sometimes I get cranky. I walk in the door after a long day and it looks like the kids had a frat party while I was gone. What happened? Why are the dishes in the sink and the unfolded clothes still in a basket on the couch? Why is the table covered with tools and tape and craft supplies? What exactly happened in the eight hours I worked? I get frustrated, then angry, then my words flow like dirty water out of a rusted pipe. It's not pretty. Thankfully, my husband steps in and, after calming me down, reminds the kids of their personal responsibilities. While living as a family unit in the same house, we each have chores. The rules are pretty simple. Though we're past the days of stars on a chore chart, if whatever you're trying to put in the trash doesn't fit, take the trash out. If you don't have time to move your laundry to the dryer, don't start it and expect the next person to do your work. My personal favorite: just clean up after yourself. A family works as a unit, each doing their assigned task to help things run smoothly. Our church family works as a unit, too, with hundreds of volunteers using their gifts to further the Kingdom. At Central Bible Church, we encourage newcomers to spend a year getting settled, then we want you to join the team. You have something we need—a knack for leading others, musical ability, a way with preschoolers, or you're passionate about safety and protection. When the church works together, the Kingdom of God is multiplied. Where are you serving?

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 6:1-7.

1. What complaint did the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) make?
2. What idea did the apostles have to solve this issue?
3. What did the apostles devote themselves to?

### What Do You Think?

How does working together further God's message of salvation?

### What Do You Do?

Make a list household chores are shared by your family. What would happen if one of you stopped doing their chore? Change it up this week and make everyone have a different chore.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Spiritual Gifts

I use the special abilities God has given me to help with His work

### MEMORY VERSE: Luke 6:45

*"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."*

### KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**OUR MISSION**  
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.