

## Aim of lesson

To learn from the way the early church sorted out problems that arose, and from the care they showed to those in need.

## Bible background

Acts 6:1-7.

## Outline of lesson

You may like to remind the class of the problem of dishonesty which the church faced in last week's lesson. Today's lesson looks at another problem. Ask the class to notice what the problem is, and how they solved it, as you read together Acts 6:1-7.

## How to be fair?

By questioning the class draw out the problem of fairness in the distribution of food to the widows in need. Have the class look in detail at the way the disciples behave. After the complaint is made, the twelve gather all the disciples together. The decision is not taken by just a few; the whole church considers the problem. The twelve propose that a team of seven men should be appointed – men whom all the members consider suitable. The apostles then lay their hands on them and pray for them. This strengthens the concept that they are all working together. The deacons, as they are often called, are not a rival group to the apostles; they are part of the same church, doing different aspects of the Lord's work. Ask the class to consider what lessons they have learned about what to do and what not to do when there is a problem.

The students can summarise the discussion in the three 'tables' in the workbook.

## Seven deacons

The second part of the worksheet is a word search. The names of the seven deacons

- Stephen
- Philip
- Procorus (Prochorus in some Bibles)
- Nicanor
- Timon
- Parmenas
- Nicolas

are written horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the square. The class should mark the names with a light coloured felt pen. The remaining letters are in order and can be written on the lines below – THE EARLY CHURCH DISTRIBUTED FOOD DAILY TO THOSE WHO NEEDED IT ESPECIALLY WIDOWS.

## Digging deeper

### Widows

This section look at some widows in the Bible, and what God expects of us and them.

## Relevance to our lives

Ask the class what they know about how the church organises itself today to help its members and others in need. You may like to tell them something of the Homes, Isolation League, Bible Mission Welfare Fund, Benevolent Fund, Care Group, Samaritan Fund, Meal-a-Day Fund or orphanage in Africa and India. You may prefer to tell them about the caring that goes on in your local ecclesia. The class may like to contact the Isolation League so that they could send a letter to someone in isolation telling them of their studies in Acts, or they may like to raise some money for a Meal-a-Day project.

## Prayer

The class could write their own prayer for those in need, or they could write what they think the twelve might have prayed for the seven appointed to serve.

## Other suggestions for activities

- Each of the class, as one of the deacons, could write a letter to a friend telling what had happened and of his hopes and prayers for the work he has accepted.
- The class could act out a dialogue between a new deacon and a widow that he visits. He could explain why he was now bringing help, and she could express why she was glad that the problem had been sorted out.