

Message.

We don't have to look very far to see people who are different than those in our own household. Choose not to focus on the differences, but rather focus on the truth that through Christ we can all be one. In fact, Christ prays that we would all be one (John 17:21).

To be for these cities and for all people, we must be willing to genuinely care for those who are different from those we normally associate with. To grow as a church, we must be willing to make necessary changes and grow as individuals.

We all have a part to play within the Church. God has gifted us in different ways. Different gifts help the Church to continually be effective and healthy as it grows. Whatever our gifting, the goal is the same for all—to spread the Word of God. The Church in Acts multiplied as the Word of God increased. *Eternity is impacted when the Church places a priority and urgency on sharing the Gospel.* #bccBIGidea

Prayer.

Father,

You are wise beyond comprehension. Your Spirit overflowed the apostles' hearts and they acted accordingly, in wisdom and in love. And the world noticed, and more souls became Your children. Fill me with Your Spirit, Lord, so I can think, see, and complete acts of love for those around me, no matter how different they are, or what they've done. Let me see people the way You see them. Give me an urgency and passion for sharing the Gospel through my actions and words.

May Your Kingdom grow in my household, my neighborhood, my city...because of Your love pouring out of me.

Amen.

Scripture.

Acts 6:1-7

Matthew 25:31-46

Self-Reflection.

Read Acts 6:1-7

Put yourself in this community. You're a Jewish Christ-follower in the first century. You personally know some of the widows being neglected. Maybe you know their friends and neighbors. Some are believers, some are not. What are you experiencing, feeling, talking about, etc.? What impact does the service provided by these seven men have on those watching? What conversations are being had? What opportunities are being created? What's your part in all of this?

- What is the focus and priority of the apostles?
- How might one view the apostles' decision not to "wait tables" themselves as "unchristian"?
- Why did the apostles handle this issue in this way? Why is this important?
- Within the context of these seven verses, how and why did the Church grow rapidly?

Read Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus was not teaching a works-based salvation. He is referring to our heart behind our actions. As disciples who know God's love, we should live out His love towards each other and to the world.

- How can we identify "the least of these" in our lives today?
- Who are they and what should/can we do for them?
- How will caring for each other within the Church cause the Church to grow?
- How will caring for those outside the Church impact their lives?
- What separates a Christ-followers care for others from any secular humanitarian?
- How will our actions make a Kingdom impact and spread the Gospel?