

**Opener:**

Last week, we asked you to think about and try to live radically for Christ in generosity, hospitality or honesty. How did that go?

**Read and discuss:**

1. This passage is about the early church dealing with conflict. In your own experience, how have you seen the church deal with conflict?
2. When conflict has occurred in your family, at work, or another group, how did you respond? The early church continued to grow after dealing with this conflict. How have you seen conflict strengthen a relationship, a family, or an organization?
3. Is waiting on tables or caring for widows less important than prayer and ministry of the word? Why or why not?
4. Consider other aspects of Christian life (such as prayer and study, or building community). Can you balance these aspects with Christian service and what is that like?
5. Why did the early leaders lay hands on and pray for these seven "deacons?" Have you ever been prayed for in such a meaningful way?

**Activity:**

The first deacons waited on tables for widows. This week, make or serve dinner or do housework so that others can be at ease. How does this feel? How can this practice bring us closer to God?

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

- > Pray for healing for Ryan Carr.
- > Pray for encouragement and protection for our mission partners, Josh and Kelsey Mygatt.
- > Pray for the Kentucky and Mexico short term mission teams as they serve this week.

**Info for your group:**

- > **Volunteers are needed for Trunk or Treat at ZPC on Oct 29.**
- > **Shepherd Community Center needs volunteers for their fall celebration on Oct 31.**  
Visit [zpc.org/current\\_opportunities](http://zpc.org/current_opportunities) for more information.

**Leader's Notes:**

We all have to deal with conflict. I heard recently that we can have three responses to conflict: fight, flight or freeze. Perhaps Christ can do more than that in conflict. In dealing with this conflict, the early church leaders listen well, and deal with conflict directly, and creatively come up with a solution which involves others in the church. The church continues to grow and be blessed. The early church was known for caring for the sick, the hurting, the poor, and widows. They passed this early test with flying colors. May we deal with conflict in a healthy way as people, groups, and churches.

**[Question 1]** As discussed by Jerry in the sermon, the early church leaders listened and heard about the problem. They knew what they could do and couldn't do. They asked the others to choose 7 from their group to solve the conflict. They modeled healthy problem-solving. Let your group talk about ways they have seen conflict handled.

**[Question 2]** When you have conflict, you may want to go in a corner and hide, deal with it right away, or get angry and get defensive. But conflict handled well can lead to growth. As in Acts 6, a group can grow and strengthen as they learn and work together. Have you seen that in your own life or groups?

**[Question 3]** No, caring for widows and providing food is not less important than prayer and teaching the word. The twelve disciples knew that this kind of physical care was not in their gifts. But it is still important and should be done. So they did not ignore it, but asked others to take care of it. The work of the church should be shared by its members.

**[Question 4]** Yes, different aspects of the Christian life should be balanced. It is important to build up our inner life (pray, solitude, personal study) in order to strengthen our outer life (community, service, caring for others). A healthy Christian spends time with God alone and with others to build them up and to be encouraged to live for Christ. That is why corporate worship and home groups are very important.

**[Question 5]** These early "deacons" were commissioned by prayer and the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands symbolizes God's blessing through others in the body of Christ, and was a Jewish practice to set apart a person for special service. At ZPC, we lay hands on new elders and deacons, and missionaries (both short-term and long-term) to bless and commission them. It's good to care for each other and bless each other, even in smaller groups.

**[Question 6]** First, you can answer the questions of how does it feel to serve others by serving food or doing chores. These things are important to show others that you care and to ease their burdens when they need help. Putting others first helps us to put ourselves second, and thus get a sense of what it was like for Jesus to put others first (Philippians 2:1-7). Then, challenge your group to practice serving this way in the next 7 days.