

**Grace in Action**

(based on Acts 6:1-7)

The church was growing. At first, only a few people were meeting together. Then more people heard about Jesus and became followers.

The people lived together and shared everything they had. The church was full of love. More and more people joined every day. It was an exciting time.

After a while, so many people were part of the church that it was hard to be fair. When food was shared, some people got more than others did.

“They got more food than we did,” complained some of the women. “It’s not fair.”

And the people began arguing.

The church leaders could see lots of people needed help. They met together to pray and talk about what to do.

“Let’s choose seven helpers,” they decided. “We need to find some people who will help us make sure that everyone is treated fairly.”

So the disciples began to look for some people who would be good helpers.

“Our helpers need to be filled with the Holy Spirit,” they said. “Let’s find people who want to share God’s love by giving food to the hungry.”

Everyone liked this idea. The disciples started by choosing a follower of Jesus named Stephen. He was a good man who followed in Jesus’ way of love. Then they chose six other helpers from the church.

The seven helpers were brought to the leaders. The disciples prayed and placed their hands on them. They wanted to show everyone that these seven helpers had been called to do this important work.

When the service was over, the seven helpers went out to make sure everyone had enough food to eat. They worked hard to see that all the people were treated fairly. And the church kept on growing.



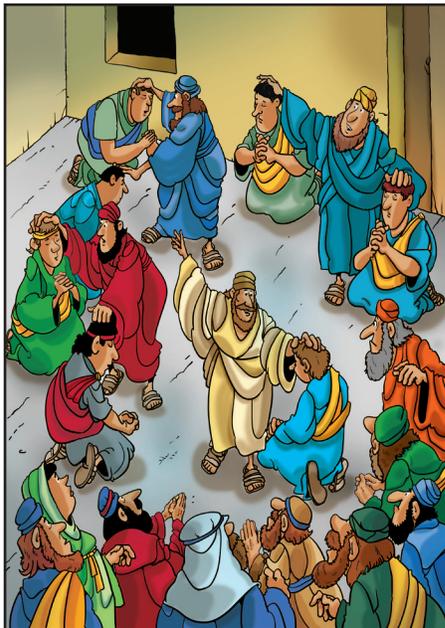
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your family members—imagine and wonder.
- Imagine the earliest days of the church. There was much work to be done. Invite your family members to name some tasks suggested by the story.
- When a new organization is begun, many decisions have to be made. Have you ever been a part of something very new, like a newly formed sports team or a club? Imagine getting things done without being able to say, “We always . . .” What sort of things would you want to be sure are done in a new church?



Responding to God's Grace

- Why would widows have needed food from the church? In this story, could *widows* be a symbol for others in need? Who might be needy today?
- Many congregations provide a hot meal to anyone who wants to come. Do you know anyone serving in a ministry like this? Talk to them about their work. Ask them why they serve in this way. Find out if there are opportunities for your family to serve together. If you already serve in this way, talk about why you do so.
- The seven people in the story are considered to be the first *deacons* in the church. Does your church have deacons? If not, who are the people who help when people are in need? (Sometimes this is called a caring ministry.) Talk to a deacon or person in a caring ministry in your church about the work they do for the church. How could your family help with some of this work?

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Does your church collect food for a food pantry? Put together a donation for the food pantry, and take it to church.
- What might be a need in your church or community and how might you and others do something about it? Do children need school supplies or after-school snacks? Is there a shelter for families and would they like some gently used toys and books? Talk to others about helping you start a ministry that cares for others in a special way.
- Help your family members think of people in your church who are helpers, full of the Spirit, and wise. Pray for those people by name.