

Deacons

Acts 6:1-7

So, the new Church has stopped adding and now they have begun multiplying. The church is growing quickly, and this has produced the problem of many needs and not enough people to meet those needs.

It appears that the Apostles up to now have taken responsibility for seeing to all these needs. However, they realize that these daily ministrations are taking them away from their primary mission which is to preach and teach the word of God as it is revealed to them. So, the Apostles place the matter back in the hands of the church. They command the church to choose from their number 7 men who will be servants of the people. Let's see what the work of a Deacon is all about.

The Church Is Given A Command

The church was told to choose from their own number *“seven men...whom we may appoint over this business”*. It is necessary to note that the Apostles were not abdicating their authority, they were delegating the work needing to be done. The church had the responsibility for sorting through all these members and then narrowing it down to who met the qualifications to become their servants in the church. Once this is done the apostles would then appoint them to that work if the Holy Spirit agreed that these men were qualified.

The phrase *“over this business”* has been taken out of context and misunderstood over the years. Deacons do not exist as church bosses. They are not over the *“business”* of the church. In fact, the Deacons have no authority at all in the church. Deacons serve at the pleasure of the church not the other way around. My grandfather taught that Deacons were to be listened to as if they did have authority. They are not officers of any kind, they are simply servants taking care of the physical things needing to be done. Now don't misunderstand, what the Deacon does is vitally important to the function of the church daily. Their work is critical to maintain the organization and smooth operation of church functions such as worship and fellowship.

The Deacons **serve** the church! Nowhere does the Bible say that when a man is chosen as a Deacon he is to serve in that position for life. Like the Preacher, the Deacon serves at the pleasure of the church for as long as the church wants them to serve. A Deacon can be removed by the church at any time. Deacons are servants, not rulers!

The **“business”** they were to be placed over was **“serving tables”**, v. 2. The phrase **“serving tables”** translates the same word that gives us the word **“Deacon”**. The word refers to **“a table waiter; a domestic servant; one who attends to the needs of others.”** The word literally means **“to kick up dust.”** It is the image of a servant working so hard and fast that he leaves a cloud of dust in his wake.

So, a Deacon is a man who is chosen to be a servant of the church. He is to be busy in his service, kicking up dust as he meets the needs of the people of God. Any man who sees the work of a Deacon as a position of power does not deserve the office. Any man who refuses to serve and meet the needs of the church is not fit to be called a Deacon! He is simply not worthy to be honored in this way.

The command was for the church to choose from their number seven men who would be servants in the church. We don't know exactly how this was accomplished but we do know the qualifications at this point; **“seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom”**. How the church determined the seven men named is unknown to us but the record goes on to say that the church selected these 7 men and Apostles laid hands on them and gave they this work to do. This congregation will be called upon today to begin this same process.

We are blessed to have four men currently serving the church as Deacons. The Elders have met with them recently and it was determined that the work that needs done is too much for just four Deacons. Keith Shovestull has served for decades now. He has seen good times and bad. Kwesi, Scemore and Ken have served for several years now. They too have seen much change in the congregation. If we are to move the church forward with viability these men need help.

Not just adding more Deacons, but your individual help by agreeing to work with these men to get the work done. Everyone is busy; everyone has commitments; everyone has priorities. But there is work needing done here at West Side. What priority does have have in your life??

The Church Faced A Challenge

While the men they were told to choose would be servants, they were also to be special men. The men they were to choose were to have special characteristics. This would help to eliminate immature, self-seeking individuals from being a Deacon. The Apostles wanted to ensure that these men would always seek the best for the **whole** church! Over time the qualifications were modified. 1 Tim. 3:8-13 gives us these qualifications. Not every man in the church will measure up to these qualifications. But the Holy Spirit gives specific qualifications that must be met before a man is appointed.

The biblical model is for the church to choose the Deacons from among themselves. However, this relies upon the church doing the right thing! So, pray that God will give us the desire to follow God's pattern and that we find men among us with a servant's heart. We need men who are good, godly and gifted. We don't choose men who are good business men. We don't choose men who have money. We don't choose men who are a certain age. We need men who know God and have a heart to serve, are qualified and who will be a blessing to us.

The Church Faced A Choice

The church got together and made their selections. These men were presented to the Apostles for final approval. The seven men they chose were appointed to the task. The church prospered as a result of the service of the Deacons. In fact, two of them, Stephen and Philip, became evangelists. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, **Acts 7**. Philip was used as a preacher, **Acts 8**. Being a preacher and a Deacon are not mutually exclusive. In other words, a man who is called to preach can also serve as a Deacon, if the church so desires.

The early church chose the right men and the church benefited from their choice. If we choose the right men, we will benefit as well.

Qualifications of Deacons

Deacons have specific qualifications that are clearly outlined in Scripture. Each deacon should be an active member of the church and possess the qualifications that are described in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. The qualifications for deacons can be divided into two categories: personal character and spiritual character.

Personal Character

1. A man of dignity, reverent, he must be worthy of respect, serious minded, not treating serious things lightly (1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 2:7).
2. Not double-tongued; not hypocritical in speech (3:8).
3. Not addicted to much wine; a man of sobriety (3:8).
4. Not fond of gain and greedy for money (3:8; 1 Pet. 5:2).
5. Married — husband of one wife with children, ruling their own household well (3:12).
6. His wife must be reverent, serious in mind and character; not silly or flippant about important matters. Not slanderers, nor is she a malicious gossip. She is to be temperate, alert, vigilant, clear-headed, and sober. She is to be faithful in all things. (3:11).

Spiritual Character

1. Must hold *“to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience,”* must have convictions based on knowledge of biblical doctrine (3:9).
2. Must be a man already tested and proved to be faithful (3:10).
3. Morally pure in every way (3:10, 12).
4. A spiritual guide to his family (3:12; Eph. 6:4).

Remember a deacon is a servant in the church. Let us keep each of these qualifications in mind as we look at our men whom we might put forth to be considered as deacons.

Conclusion

Do we still need Deacons today? Yes, we still need Deacons! Beyond that we need the right kind of Deacons!

We need men who will take on the work of serving others. We need men who are good, godly, gifted men to meet the needs of the church. We need servants!

We do not need men who want power, prestige and position. We do not need men who are just looking for a title or an office.

Today, I want to ask every member of this congregation to pray about selecting Deacons. We need more but we need the right men. We need to ask God to give us wisdom as we choose the men who will serve.

We need to ask God to help us put aside opinion. We need to ask Him to help us make our decision apart from emotion, popularity or preference. We need to ask Him to guide our choice for His glory.

We as a congregation have a LOT going on right now. We have just concluded an enormous work on our property. We have done well financially with this matter.

We are poised to begin in 2020 a decade long commitment to building up this congregation numerically to the glory of God. We are committed to serve God and do His work. To do this we need the help of every member and we need more men to serve as a Deacon.

May our Father lead us, guide us and keep us as we make these decisions.