

With the Bishops and Deacons

Philippians 1:1

PART 1

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

Introduction:

1. Matters of organization in the local church are of vital importance.
2. For a congregation to function as God intended (both internally and in the world) it must be organized according to God's pattern.
3. Early departures from the truth were in respect to organization (Acts 20:28-30).
4. Furthermore, good leadership is essential for any congregation.
5. The New Testament is our only guide for church organization.

I. The Organization of the Church

- A. A congregation may be **SCRIPTURALLY UNORGANIZED**.
 1. When no men meet the qualifications of elders or deacons
 2. This is not God's plan and often a challenging arrangement.
 3. No congregation should desire to remain in this condition.
- B. A congregation may be **UNSCRIPTURALLY UNORGANIZED**.
 1. When there are qualified men who are not appointed or do not serve
 2. Sometimes seen on the mission field
 3. Sometimes due to a Diotrephes (3 John 9), or a preacher who wants to rule as a "pastor"
 4. God's pattern must be followed!
- C. A congregation may be **UNSCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED**.
 1. When God's simple plan for organization is changed
 2. When unqualified men are appointed as elders or deacons
 3. When the preacher is the "pastor"
- D. A congregation may be **SCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED**.
 1. When Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18)
 2. When a plurality of qualified elders oversee the local congregation (Acts 11:29-30; 14:23; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; 4:14; 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5ff; Heb. 13:24; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1ff)
 3. When qualified men serve as deacons, under the oversight of the local eldership
- E. The goal of every congregation should be scriptural organization.

II. The Qualifications of Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

- A. A willingness to serve (Acts 6:1-6) {*"Deacon" means "servant"*}
- B. A willingness to work (3:13; cf. 3:1)
- C. Grave
 1. The word means "reputable, dignified, venerable or honorable."
 2. "[T]he word points to seriousness of purpose and to self-respect in conduct."

3. It is the idea of a man who is respected because he approaches his duties with seriousness and solemnity.
 - D. Not double-tongued
 1. Literally, “not of two words;” that is, equivocal
 2. Not saying one thing to one and something different to another
 3. Or, saying one thing but meaning another
 4. A deacon must be honest and speak the truth.
 - E. Not given to much wine
 1. Not turning the mind toward or bringing near intoxicants (cf. 1:4)
 2. Parallel idea to gluttony (could be non-alcoholic wine)
 3. There is no biblical justification for drinking alcoholic beverages.
 - F. Not greedy of filthy lucre
 1. Not covetous; eager for base (ill-gotten) gain
 2. A deacon must not accept the office as a means of gain.
 3. Nor must he use his position to get money unethically
 4. Nor must he be stingy with the Lord’s money
 - G. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience
 1. Steadfast adherence; to hold fast or hold onto (not wishy-washy)
 2. Once a mystery, now revealed in the Gospel (Mark 4:11; Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:6ff; Eph. 3:3-4)
 3. “The faith” = the Gospel of Christ; includes obedience
 4. With a clean conscience – in sincerity and genuineness
 - H. First proved
 1. Not a new convert
 2. One who has been tested and demonstrated his meeting these qualifications
 3. Their lives up to this point have manifested these characteristics
 - I. Blameless
 1. Literally, “provided they are unaccused”
 2. It means to be above reproach; cannot be called into account
 3. A man of “honest report” (cf. Ac. 6:3)
 - J. Husbands of one wife
 1. Deacons must be married (cf. Rom. 7:1-4).
 2. They must be faithful to their marriage vow.
 3. This excludes women from serving as deacons.
 - K. Ruling their children and their own houses well
 1. Ruling means “to preside over; superintend; to stand before (lead).”
 2. As husbands, they are to be the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23).
 3. As fathers, they are to exercise authority over their children (Eph. 6:1-4; Heb. 12:7-10).
 4. One child qualifies (cf. Gen. 21:7; Eph. 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:4)
 5. Not required to be Christians (cf. Titus 1:6)
 - L. Only those who possess these characteristics may serve as deacons in the Lord’s church.
- II. The Qualifications of Deacons’ Wives (1 Timothy 3:11)
- A. Grave – *Same as above*
 - B. No slanderer – *false accuser; gossip, etc.*
 - C. Sober – *Serious, temperate (1 Peter 5:8)*
 - D. Faithful in all things – *in the church, home, family, work, etc.*

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PART 2

THE WORK OF DEACONS

Introduction:

1. Matters of organization in the local church are of vital importance.
2. God's pattern is for a local congregation to be overseen by a plurality of elders and served by a plurality of deacons.
3. Our last lesson looked at the qualifications of deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
4. Today, we will consider the work of deacons.

I. Determining the Work of Deacons

- A. Because the Bible does not specifically list the work of deacons, we must ascertain it by a study of the Scriptures.
- B. The meaning of the word "deacon"
 1. The word means "servant."
 - a. Thayer says, "one who executes the commands of another; a servant, attendant, minister."
 - b. Strong says that it was the word for a waiter "at table or in other menial duties."
 2. It is translated as *minister* (20 times), *servant* (7 times), and *deacon* (4 times).
 3. Thus, the work of a deacon is to serve.
- C. The qualifications of a deacon
 1. By studying the qualifications of a deacon, we may learn what is expected of him.
 2. Obviously, his service is to be taken seriously and approached with a solemn attitude of honor and respect.
 3. Also, his appetites must be kept in check that he may serve honestly, ethically, and with fairness.
 4. It is a service that supports and promotes the Gospel of Christ.
 5. Their service is one of love for their fellowman, demonstrated by their leadership in their homes.
- D. The function of the eldership
 1. The elders are charged with overseeing the local congregation.
 2. As servants, the deacons carry out the instructions of the eldership.
 - a. It should be noted that deacons are not overseers.
 - b. They do not have the same authority as the elders.
 3. Thus, their service is in matters of expediting the desires of the elders with delegated authority (cf. Acts 6:1-6).
- E. The work of the church
 1. The church is not authorized to do just anything.
 2. Thus, the service of a deacon must fall under the categories of work that the church is to do – benevolence, evangelism, edification.
- F. By considering these four things, we get an overview of the work of a deacon.

- II. Defining the Work of Deacons
 - A. Ultimately, the work of the deacons is to see that the work and worship of the church is carried out decently and in order.
 - 1. To this end, they assist the eldership.
 - 2. "Wherever possible they will relieve the elders to do more important work which only elders can do."
 - 3. Deacons work in areas where the elders have already made decisions and "ensure that the work is carried out and that nothing is neglected."
 - 4. "A deacon's work is to assist the elders of a congregation so as to keep them from becoming overburdened with matters which other men can handle."
 - B. Deacons serve in benevolent work (Acts 6:1-6).
 - 1. Matthew 4:11; 8:15
 - 2. Elders set the guidelines to be followed, based upon the Word of God.
 - 3. Deacons carry out the work, under the authority of the elders.
 - C. Deacons serve by helping the needs of the church (Romans 15:25).
 - 1. These may be physical or spiritual needs.
 - 2. Visitation (hospitals, sick, shut in, etc.)
 - 3. Worship service
 - 4. Building maintenance
 - 5. Treasurer / Bookkeeper
 - D. Deacons serve in edification of the church (Colossians 4:7).
 - 1. Bible classes (teachers, material, etc.)
 - 2. Vacation Bible School
 - 3. Bible Bowl
 - 4. Youth programs
 - E. Deacons serve in evangelism (Colossians 1:7).
 - 1. Tracts / Correspondence courses
 - 2. Audio / Video of sermons
 - 3. Bulletins / Mailings
 - 4. Website / Internet
 - F. Deacons serve by following Christ (John 12:26).
 - 1. They are examples of servants of Jesus.
 - 2. By their good works, they encourage others.

Conclusion:

- 1. There are many areas of service in which deacons help the local congregation.
- 2. May we all learn the need of faithful, loyal service in the kingdom of Christ.

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PART 3

THE APPOINTING OF DEACONS

THE REWARD OF DEACONS

Introduction:

1. We have studied the qualifications of deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13).
 2. We have studied the work of deacons.
 3. Now, we come to the conclusion of this series and to the appointing of deacons.
 4. Today, we will consider two important aspects in the study of deacons.
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- I. The Process of Appointing Deacons
 - A. The word “ordain” has been misused by many (Titus 1:5).
 1. It means, “to designate, appoint; to place or to set.”
 2. It is the idea of placing one in a position – to set down.
 - B. The process of ordination has also been abused.
 1. In the OT, there was much ritual and ceremony.
 2. In the NT, this is not the case – simplicity is the pattern in the spiritual kingdom of Christ.
 - C. There are three things involved in the appointing of servants in the church.
 - D. First, there is teaching (Acts 6:1-4).
 1. The congregation needs to understand what is being done.
 2. They need to know the qualifications and expectations.
 3. Those selected need to know their work.
 - E. Second, there is prayer (Acts 6:5-6).
 1. Prayer is always appropriate, but also essential.
 - a. It is the Lord’s work; so, we must involve Him!
 - b. We will not be successful without the Lord.
 2. Often, it was joined with fasting (Acts 13:2-3).
 - F. Finally, there is the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6).
 1. Sometimes this refers to the imparting of miraculous abilities by the Apostles (cf. Acts 8:15-19).
 2. But, it also referred to a means of endorsement, approval and fellowship.
 - a. Timothy received miraculous gifts (2 Tim. 1:6).
 - b. Yet, he also received the endorsement of the eldership (1 Timothy 4:14).
 - c. This signaled their approval and support of his new work with the Apostle Paul.
 - d. This practice would continue in the church (1 Tim. 5:22).
 3. This need not be some elaborate ritual – shaking of hands will do.
 - G. We will follow this example and participate in all three things today.

- II. The Blessings of Serving
 - A. There are specific rewards received by those who serve as deacons.
 - 1. To “use the office of a deacon well” simply means to “serve well” (ASV) – to minister excellently.
 - 2. Of course, this implies that some may not serve well.
 - B. This serves to remind all Christians that we are blessed as we serve.
 - C. They “purchase to themselves a good degree.”
 - 1. The word “purchase” means, “to acquire, gain” (Acts 20:28).
 - 2. Here, the tense of the verb means that deacons are acquiring – in the process as they serve.
 - 3. The word “degree” literally means, “a step or grade.”
 - 4. It means that deacons acquire good standing by their service.
 - 5. It is a standing that is excellent – not in pride, but humility.
 - 6. This good standing is in their work as deacons.
 - D. They “purchase ... great boldness in the faith.”
 - 1. Note that the words are “good” and “great,” not “better” and “greater.”
 - 2. As a deacon does his work, he becomes more settled and confident in it.
 - 3. His boldness (or, assurance) is not self-reliance, but built upon his faith in Jesus.
 - E. They receive the reward of Heaven.
 - 1. All Christians are to serve faithfully in aspects of life, for we serve Christ (Colossians 3:22-24).
 - 2. All those who serve the Lord faithfully will be with Him eternally (John 12:26; Matthew 25:21).

Conclusion:

- 1. The office of a Deacon is essential to the organization and work of the church.
- 2. It presents many challenges, but also many rewards.
- 3. May we all be encouraged to serve the Lord faithfully in every part of our lives.

Service to Appoint Deacons

1. Opening Songs / Prayer / Song
2. First part of Sermon – *The Process of Appointing Deacons*
 - a. Acts 6:6; 13:2-3
 - b. 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:14
 - c. 1 Timothy 5:22
3. Prayer
4. Have Deacon stand

After consideration from the eldership and the congregation, you are to be set apart this day to serve this congregation as a Deacon. While all Christians are servants, you have been selected as a special servant of the church. Your character and example have demonstrated you to be a man of devotion, diligence, and faithfulness who will serve the Lord and His church well.

This responsibility is serious and comes with many challenges. Yet, it also carries with it great rewards.

We charge you before Almighty God to approach this work with gravity and seriousness. We charge you to conduct this work prayerfully and faithfully. And, in all things, strive to honor God with your service.

As you shake hands with the elders of this congregation, we recognize and appoint you as a Deacon of the _____ Church of Christ.

5. Deacon shakes hands with each elder
6. Second part of Sermon – *The Blessings of Serving*
7. Invitation Song