

Lesson 1

The Ministry of the Deacon

1.0 ***The Formation of Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13).***

Note: *Knowing the meaning of words and more particularly the function of roles captured by these words is extremely helpful in building the local church. We're a part of one church body having many members who function in unique ways. Let's explore the role, function, and ministry of the deacon.*

1.1 ***The definition of the English word "deacon":***

- A) The Greek word diaconos means a "runner," "messenger," or "servant."
- B) The word deacon is found once in **Philippians 1:1** and four (4) times in **1 Timothy**. The rendering of deacon (Greek word is diaconos) occurs about 30 times in the New Testament (NT) and it means "minister" or "servant." The adjective diakonia (or ministry) occurs about 70 times. Together, we see approximately 100 occurrences of these two words referencing the ministry of the deacon, as a servant of the church.
- C) The word deacon does not reference a particular technical function within the church. It does, however, point to a significant role and placement of honor upon one who diligently helps with the administrative and social responsibilities of the church toward its mission and purpose (**Acts 16:1-2**).

1.2 ***The origin of the deacon's function and role in the church (Acts 6:1-7):***

- A) Deacons arose because of the need for quality service in the house of God.
- B) Deacons arose because of the need for the elders to give themselves to the study of Scripture and prayer. The deacon's job is to drastically reduce the elders' day-to-day involvement in the mundane affairs of the church.
- C) Deacons came on the scene because of the church's need for proper representation to its members AND the community.

- D) Deacons originated because of the church's need for oral historians and keepers of truth.

1.3

The place of the deacon in the New Testament church (Acts 6:1-7):

A) An ordained position

- 1) This means the deacon has demonstrated a measure of effectiveness and qualification to be ordained. The words ordination and ordain mean to appoint. This action is a very solemn occasion. Luke tells us that Jesus prayed all night before making his selection to ordain (appoint) the 12 to be apostles (**Luke 6:13**).
- 2) Being ordained means that a deacon is under authority. The one(s) who ordained him/her is an authority figure in the deacon's life and ministry.
- 3) Becoming ordained reflects a delegated position, one of assignment and accountability. An ordained person is appointed to a specific area requiring clear accountability and authority.

B) A role of service

- 1) The principal reason for the deacon's existence and recognition is to serve—to minister to the church's needs.
- 2) To serve is to help, to aid, to ensure that one's felt needs are met in a way that brings honor to God and His church.

C) A leadership position

- 1) The word leadership is spelled: **S•E•R•V•E**. Thus, the deacon's function of serving the church is a leadership role requiring great skill and character.
- 2) The deacon's role is to advance the church's vision and mission to the world, the gospel of Christ, and organizational effectiveness. These functions all convey that leadership is at work when the deacon is engaged in ministry.

D) A delegated position

- 1) This means the office of a deacon is a formally appointed function.
- 2) This means a deacon is under the Lord's authority and that of the local elders.
- 3) A delegated position is one of assignment and accountability.

2.0 ***A closer look at a deacon.***

2.1 ***The profile of a deacon.***

Note: *Although the principal meaning of the word deacon is to serve, the exact placement of the deacon is not limited to any one area of the ministry. As long as the church is being strengthened through the service provided by this servant-leader, the title of deacon is befitting of such a labor of love. Let's look at the profile of some of the New Testament deacons.*

A) Philip (Acts 6:5): This deacon is one of the seven men chosen to administrate the daily distribution of food between the Grecian and Hebraic widows in the Jerusalem church. Years later, during the early days of the church's persecution, Philip held a crusade in the city of Samaria where many were delivered and set free to serve Christ.

(Acts 8:4-8).

B) Procorus (Acts 6:5): This deacon was also one of the seven men named alongside Philip. Unlike Philip, Procorus' name gives us a peek as to his grace gift. The name Procorus means circle dance. In addition to having administrative gifts to handle the daily food needs of widows, Procorus also functioned in the dance ministry of the church.

C) Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2): This deacon served the interests of the church in Cenchrea. She was a leader who needed the assistance of others to carry out her role of assisting those with greater responsibilities, including the apostle Paul.

2.2 **The tasks of a deacon (Acts 6:1-7)**

Note: *The role that a deacon provides in the church is an invaluable one. The leadership, service, administrative and emotional strength given to the church is to be commended. If one was to outline the top six (6) ministry functions of a deacon, they would encompass the list below.*

- A) Ministerial support:** To alleviate distractions to the elders and ordained clergy, the deacon willingly provides support by assuming much of the responsibility for the mundane affairs of the church. This affords the pastors (also termed elders) time to give themselves to the priority of studying Scripture and the ministry of prayer.
- B) Organizational support:** The church is an organization which requires organizational leaders who know how to please all of the stakeholders. The deacon—one who knows the church from the inside out—helps to create pastoral efficiency, administrative effectiveness, and social relevance.
- C) Problem solver:** Similar to the Church at Jerusalem, the early deacons were appointed to solve a problem—the proper feeding of the Grecians and Hebraic widows. A deacon is a problem solver to the local church.
- D) Governmental support:** The elders comprise the officers within the local church government. Government provides vision, safety, order, and the proper medium for social and spiritual satisfaction. The deacon assists in this endeavor under the elder's authority.
- E) Management support:** The church is a pastoral community and the term management represents a portion of the pastoral duties that must be conducted. The deacon brings an expertise to the forefront so that every aspect of the management of the local church occurs with excellence and technological relevance.
- F) Getting the message out:** The church exists to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to EVERYBODY. The deacon's role is to help get this message out in relevant ways that brings people to Christ and ultimately into responsible membership in the local church.