

THE ROLE OF DEACONS

I. What is a deacon?

- A. The word in the Greek language is “diakonos” and it means “one who executes the commands of another, especially a master; a servant, attendant, minister” (Thayer).
- B. This word is used 31 times in the New Testament.
 - 1. 20 times it is translated minister (i.e., Matthew 20:26; Romans 13:4).
 - 2. 8 times servant (i.e., Matthew 22:13; John 12:26).
 - 3. 3 times deacon (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 12).
- C. Notice, government officials are called diakonos (Romans 13:4).
- D. Jesus is called a diakonos (Romans 15:8).
- E. Paul and Apollos were called diakonos (1 Corinthians 3:5).
- F. What can we learn from all this?
 - 1. The word was sometimes used in a general sense.
 - 2. The word was used at times in a specific sense as well, referring to special servants of a local congregation.
 - 3. Notice these two examples from the same book:
 - a. 1 Timothy 4:6 - general sense.
 - b. 1 Timothy 3:8, 10, 12-13 - these men were a specific group inside a congregation who met certain criteria.
- G. How do we know there is such a special office, since the word is used so often in a general sense?
 - 1. 1 Timothy 3 mentions the office of a deacon and then lists qualifications that would not apply to a general servant in the church - one can be a faithful Christian and not be the husband of one wife, but you can't be a deacon and not be the husband of one wife.
 - 2. Philippians 1:1 separates deacons from elders and saints.

II. Deacons serve the local congregation.

- A. Deacons have secular jobs but aren't deacons because of such.
- B. They serve in God's service.
- C. The role and work of deacons is to carry out the work assigned them by the eldership.
- D. We need to stress that there is nothing demeaning or degrading about being a servant (Matthew 20:26-27).
- E. All Christians are to serve one another (Galatians 5:13).
- F. However, deacons are a special class of servant:
 - 1. They have somehow been selected by the congregation.
 - 2. They are given special assignments by the elders.
 - 3. They are required to meet certain qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
 - 4. They are specifically mentioned along with elders (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1, 8).
- G. If you have the title “deacon” but are not serving you are not really a deacon.

1. It doesn't matter what men call you.
2. Being a deacon is not about having a title, but serving in the kingdom.

III. Deacons serve under the elders.

- A. Elders are the ones given the charge to oversee the flock (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28).
- B. Elders are the ones who rule over the congregation (1 Timothy 3:5; 5:17; Hebrews 13:17).
- C. Deacons, like us, are under the oversight of the eldership.
- D. The elders give the deacons their assignments, not vice versa.
- E. Because they are under the elders, they need to communicate with the elders to keep the elders updated in their areas of work.
- F. There will be occasions when the elders need to meet with the deacons and the deacons need to be available for such.
 1. If a man is unwilling to attend such meetings, he shouldn't take on the role of deacon.
 2. If he does not like being given tasks by others, he shouldn't take on the role of deacon.

IV. Areas in which deacons serve.

- A. The principle of Acts 6:2-4 comes into play here.
 1. The leaders concentrated on important spiritual matters.
 2. Other matters were turned over to faithful servants.
- B. Think what it would be like if the elders were constantly bogged down with the building or needy while delinquent, sick or weak members were being neglected.
- C. The work of the church, benevolence, evangelism and edification, will be all be connected to the work of a deacon.
 1. It may be keeping the building in order so that the congregation has a proper place to meet to be edified.
 2. It may be over the Bible Correspondence Courses as a means of evangelism.
 3. He could be over the educational curriculum or visitation program or a multitude of other areas.

V. Errors that come up involving deacons.

- A. Elders are over the spiritual and deacons over the material.
 1. This can't be the case because deacons are under the authority of elders in all things as all members are.
 2. In Acts 11:27-30, the contribution to physically help the Palestinian Jews was sent to the elders, not deacons.
 3. When Paul wanted to instruct about oversight of the church in Ephesus, he called for the elders, not deacons.
 4. There is nowhere in the New Testament where deacons are said to have oversight of anything.
 5. Deacons can and should be involved in spiritual matters.
- B. Some falsely believe that deacons are junior elders.
- C. Some believe a board of deacons rules over the church.

- D. Some appoint men as deacons simply to honor them.
- E. Some appoint men as deacons to help them become faithful.
 - 1. Paul said these men should be proved, not show potential.
 - 2. You can't hope a man is going to be something.
- F. There is movement in someplace towards appoint deaconesses.
 - 1. This is a misunderstanding of 1 Timothy 3:11 and Romans 16:1.
 - 2. There is not one thing stated about deaconesses in the New Testament.
 - 3. No way a deaconess can be husband of one wife.
 - 4. There is a general use of diakonos and Romans 16:1 is such - if such is not the case then government officials are deacons as well.
- G. Some make it a political race.
- H. Appointing a man whose wife is not qualified (1 Timothy 3:11).
- I. Some won't appoint a man who is qualified but did something sinful in the past for which he has received forgiveness.
- J. Some act like once you are a deacon, always a deacon.
 - 1. These qualifications are not one time deals.
 - 2. If the qualifications cease to be met, he should step down.

Material from this sermon came from numerous sources.