

THE WORK OF A DEACON

(Acts 6:1-5)

I. An early example.

- a. Acts 6:1-5 was read for us earlier.
- b. I realize that the term deacon is nowhere in this text.
 - i. However, the noun form of the word is found in Acts 6:1, where it is translated “ministration” and the New American Standard has it translated as “daily serving of food”, as well as 6:4 where it is translated “ministry”.
 - ii. In Acts 6:2, the verb form is found and translated “serve” and this is the same word that is found in 1 Timothy 3:10 and 13 where it is translated “use the office of a deacon”.
- c. There is also the similarity in language concerning the word appoint.
 - i. The apostles told the members to pick some men from their number that the apostles could then appoint to the work that needed doing.
 - ii. That same word for appoint is found in Titus 1 where Paul told Titus to “ordain” elders – appoint and ordain are both the same Greek word.
- d. Because the term deacon is not found in Acts 6, some won’t call these men deacons.
- e. I’m fine with that as long as we agree that these seven men set a precedent for what would become the role of a deacon.
- f. These men were chosen by the people of the congregation and appointed by the apostles.
 - i. I believe it right and wise for elders to ask the congregation for names of men who the congregation believes to be qualified to be deacons.
 - ii. This passage gives the authority for that path to be followed in the selection and appointment of those who will serve as deacons.
- g. The work that these seven men took on was not some unimportant work.
 - i. Nowhere in this text do we see the apostles looking down on this work.
 - ii. It was the work of taking care of widows and making sure they had enough to eat.
 - iii. This was a very important work but it was not necessary that the apostles take care of it.
 - iv. This would have taken them away from their main responsibilities of preaching and praying.
- h. Notice Acts 6:7, which tells us the result of the apostles handling the matter in this way – the gospel was able to spread in a great way.
- i. So we see an illustration of the work that deacons can and should be doing and also how they are to be appointed from Acts 6.

II. The idea of service.

- a. As we mentioned, the word deacon is also translated servant and carries the idea of work.
- b. This should be a title for each of us in some sense.
 - i. The apostles were servants (Acts 6:4 – ministry is the noun form of this word).
 - ii. Acts 20:24 – ministry is the same word.
- c. Phoebe was called a servant, which is the word translated deacon (Romans 16:1).
 - i. Sadly, there are those who take that verse and try to make it give authority for female deacons.
 - ii. Phoebe was not a deacon, but she was a servant of other Christians.
 - iii. There is no way she could be a deacon because she could not have a wife, as a deacon must have (1 Timothy 3:11-12).
- d. Timothy was described as a minister, which is the word we are discussing (1 Thessalonians 3:2).
- e. Other examples could be given, but these show us that all Christians are to be servants.
- f. However, it shouldn't be strange that there is a special role or work with this title.
 - i. All Christians are to teach others, but there are some, preachers, who dedicate their lives to it.
 - ii. All Christians are to watch for one another but there are some, elders, who have the responsibility of overseeing the souls of the congregation.
- g. These men who are deacons have met qualifications laid out for us in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
 - i. Like men who are appointed to be elders, these qualifications must be met before they take the work.
 - ii. They and their wives have shown themselves to possess the needed and required qualities in order to take on the role.

III. The work of deacons.

- a. With elders, there are specific things pointed out in scripture that entail the work of an elder.
 - i. We showed these roles last week.
 - ii. Watching, feeding, protecting, and so forth.
- b. This is not necessarily so with deacons.
- c. Deacons are to be examples of what it means to be a servant.
 - i. These men take on this work and are raised up in the eyes of the congregation.
 - ii. It is not just a title.

- d.** There is no authority in the office of deacon by itself.
 - i.** The authority of a deacon comes from them being given jobs to do by the eldership.
 - ii.** There are no passages that teach us to submit to the authority of deacons.
- e.** Deacons have responsibility in specific areas of the work of the congregation.
 - i.** They don't oversee the church, but specific areas of work within the church.
 - ii.** These areas are given them by the elders.
 - iii.** Deacons ensure that the work is carried out and not left undone or neglected.
- f.** Based on the example of Acts 6, it seems that deacons work is primarily of a physical nature dealing with day-to-day responsibilities.
 - i.** Deacons are a support structure for the eldership, so that the elders can see to the spiritual job they've been given by God.
 - ii.** This doesn't mean deacons aren't to teach.
 - iii.** It simply means their main role is to provide support for those who are active in the spiritual well-being of the church.
- g.** Most elderships of which I'm aware, including ours, have given responsibilities to each of their deacons and allow those men to do what they have to do to fulfill those responsibilities (elaborate).
- h.** When the deacons fulfill those roles, it allows the elders to be the shepherds they are supposed to be.
- i.** Elderships who don't give their deacons any work to do are doing themselves and the deacons harm.
 - i.** I knew one man who resigned from being a deacon because he said all he had was a title and no work.
 - ii.** His elders never gave the deacons anything to do.
 - iii.** He wanted no part of that and I don't blame him.