

Deacons: Servant Models in the Church
By: Henry Webb

DEACON TRAINING

9:00 – 9:45 TRAINING SESSION ONE

INTRODUCTION

Preface – Dr. Howard Foshee’s guidance in “*The Ministry of the Deacon*” clarifies the task of deacons

The New Testament sets the principles and the practical application for the deacon ministry.

This book helps deacons to demonstrate in their lives, and to apply in their churches, the biblical concepts of their role as servant leaders.

Chapter 1 guides the congregation to determine its procedures for selecting and ordaining deacons.

Chapter 2 – 5 explores the biblical qualifications for deacons.

Chapter 6 discusses the opportunity for deacons to model their ministry as partners to the pastor.

Chapters 7 – 9 discuss more specific ways deacons can carry out their responsibility to minister.

Chapter 1 – The Church Needs Servant Models

Jesus sets the example of what a servant should be.

He wanted them to learn unmistakable a basic lesson of servant hood.

The English word ***deacon*** comes from the Greek word-meaning servant.

The high qualification for pastors (overseers, elders, bishops) and deacons found in 1 Timothy 3 clearly indicates that the New Testament churches looked to these church leaders for an example of Christian living.

This chapter guides the congregation in determining its procedures for selecting and ordaining deacons who truly will be servant models for the church.

Selecting Deacons for Ministry

The selecting of deacons is one of the most important events in the life of a church.

Churches use a variety of methods.

Some of the factors that influence the church's procedure are:

- Tradition
- The size of the church
- The duties of the deacons

The church should use a method that will assure the election of deacons who are both biblically qualified and deeply committed to deacon ministry.

The most common denominator in churches is that the congregation votes to elect the deacons.

There are *four* areas included in the church's selection process:

- **FIRST** – Church required qualifications in addition to the biblical qualifications.
- **SECOND** – The terms of service the deacon will serve on the active body.
- **THIRD** – The nominating and screening of candidates.
- **FOURTH** – the preparation of the congregation for the selection process

The Church – Required Qualifications

Most churches have some age requirements for the deacon candidates.

The normal age is to be at least 25 years of age.

This should give the candidate a broad enough adult experience to be able to minister maturely to a cross section of members.

Many churches also require the deacon candidate to be a church member for at least a period of one year.

This gives the members a more adequate opportunity to become familiar with their qualifications for deacon service.

This also gives the deacon candidate time to become familiar with the nature and style of the church and how deacons minister in the church.

Churches often require some external signs of commitment to the church.

These signs can include the regular participation in church programs such as S.S. (Bible study), discipleship, Sunday worship services, as well as mid-week prayer services.

The church should also require the deacon candidate to be a tither to the general budget.

The church can also require regular deacon's meeting attendance as well as participation in specific deacon ministry training.

The Biblical Qualifications

Biblical qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:3.

Chapter 2-5 explores these qualifications in greater detail.

Term of Service

Some churches continue to use the deacons by keeping them on the active deacon body.

Many churches have a “*deacon rotation*”

This means that one third of the active deacon body will rotate off each year.

A church will chose a rotation approach for two reasons:

- **First** – This approach provides continuity with a portion of the deacons rotating off the active body each year.
- **Second** – This approach makes it possible for more members to serve as deacons.

Nomination of Deacon Candidates

A widely used nominating procedure is nomination by the entire congregation.

The best way for the nominating process is for all men age 25 and up who have been members of the church for at least one year to have their names printed in a list and handed out to the body for them to pray over for at least one week. Then list the names of the number of deacon vacancies to be filled. The Ordination council will then collect the names and determine the name(s) that received the most recommendations. The council will then review each nominee, and the qualifications, to determine who will be scheduled for interview. After the interviewing process is completed, the Ordination Council will bring the names before the body to be voted on. The candidates who receive the most votes will be scheduled for an ordination service.

The Screening of the Deacon Candidates

One of the most important steps in selecting deacons is the interviewing of prospective candidates. The purpose of this process is to determine if a person is qualified and committed according to biblical and church requirements.

The Deacon Ordination Council

This group is made up of the Pastor, deacon officer and a layperson that would be selected by the deacon body.

The Interview Process

The deacon candidate and his wife will be interviewed together in order for them to fully understand what is going to be required of them.

The interviewers should be prepared to present thorough information about qualifications, the duties of deacons and church expectations.

Preparation of the Congregation

The congregation needs to be prepared adequately for the election of deacons.

Once the church determines its selection procedure, it should record the process in detail in the church by-laws, or in an official document on “Guidelines For Selection of Deacons.”

Setting Deacons Apart For Ministry

Churches often refer to the account of the laying on of hands of the seven new servant leaders in Acts 6 as support for ordaining deacons.

The laying on of hands is expressing the approval by the people of God upon those who would serve.

The ceremony of deacon ordination is a meaningful act of Christian encouragement and recognition.

NOTE: *Anything in a Baptist church that an ordained man is authorized to do can be done by an un-ordained man on authority of the church.*

Churches often devote an entire Sunday worship service to the ordination of deacons.

The *two* major parts of the ordination service

- A charge to the deacon/s to present the challenge of deacon ministry.
- A charge to the church to encourage the congregation to support and pray for their deacons

During the ordination service, the congregation is invited to come down to lay hands on the deacon candidates because they are the members the deacons will be serving.

Each person who lays hands on the deacon's head usually whispers to the deacon a sentence or two of prayer, an affirmation or challenge, or a scripture.

The service usually concludes with the presentation of the ordained, certificate of ordination, and their Bible. A church wide reception should follow the ordination service.

Preparing Deacons for Effective Ministry

Training is necessary for deacons to be effective.

Their training will aid them in understanding the work they will be involved in.

Deacons often feel inadequate for areas of ministry in which they have minimal skills.

Training can be done in several ways.

Most popular is training during their monthly deacon's meeting. They set aside 30-45 minutes for training.

Churches, Associations, and/or State Conventions are sponsoring Deacon Conferences or Retreats.

Lifeway provides materials to train in ministry skills.

The Deacon Magazine is published each quarter to help deacons understand their role in ministry.

Using this textbook is another way to help deacons understand their role in ministry within the congregation.

Careful screening before election, adequate training, and early sensitivity to warning signals can avoid drop out or burn out problems.

Conclusion

The way the church elects, examines, and ordains its deacons should be consistent with what the congregation is seeking – Servants for the Lord through His church.

In Chapters 2-5 our focus will be on **WHO** a deacon is.

In Chapters 6-9 our discussion will be on **WHAT** a deacon does.

DEACON TRAINING SESSION TWO

DEACON MODEL: GROWTH TOWARD MATURE FAITH

Introduction

“I just don’t feel that I am qualified to be a deacon!” this is a common response of potential deacon nominees.

But it is an appropriate response by those who take the Biblical qualifications and ministry responsibilities of deacons seriously. When any of us read the Biblical qualifications we all must admit our failure to measure up.

The early church had high expectations of both pastors and deacons.

We find the qualifications listed in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.

These can be grouped into *four* general qualifications.

FIRST – Demonstrate growth toward mature faith.

“They must keep hold of the deep truths of the Faith with a clear conscience” (I Tim. 3:9)

SECOND – Demonstrate Christian Family Life

“Deacons must be husbands of but one wife, managing their children and their own households competently.” (I Tim. 3:12) and we will get more into it in our next session.

THIRD – Demonstrate personal and public morality.

“Men of dignity, not double tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain.” (I Tim. 3:8) and we will address these qualifications more in session four.

FOURTH – Demonstrate a life accepted by God and the church.

“trusted ... blameless ... those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves, and great boldness in the faith” (I Tim. 3:10, 13) and we will get a little deeper into this qualification in session five.

The purpose of chapters 2 through 5 is to enable deacons, prospective deacons, and church members voting for deacons to determine who is qualified to serve as a deacon.

NOTE – No one can meet every qualification completely, but deacons should give evidence of progress toward the goal.

The key test is a person's present continuing behavior. A person's past failure once discounted, should be evaluated both in the light of God's promises of renewing forgiveness and in light of the influence the failure of the past is having on the present.

The Biblical qualifications for deacons suggest that growth toward mature faith will come in at least four areas. They are;

FIRST – growth in experiencing God's presence (full of the Spirit)

SECOND – growth in seeing from God's perspective (full of wisdom)

THIRD – growth in integrating faith into life (holder of the faith)

FOURTH – growth in demonstrating maturity (good reputation)

FIRST – Growth in Experiencing God's Presence.

Experiencing God's presence has always been central in Biblical faith.

Some Biblical examples of this are found in Scripture.

When God called Abraham to go to a new land, God promised to go with him and show the way. (Gen. 12:1)

When Moses protested his inadequacy to lead God's people, God responded with a promise, "I will be with you." (Ex 3:12)

At the Last Supper with His disciples, Jesus was trying to prepare them for the time He would no longer be with them physically. Jesus promised, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of Truth, .. the Holy Spirit." (John 14:16-17, 26)

When the Jerusalem church needed to set apart new leaders to minister to some special needs and to heal the fellowship, they knew such men needed the fullness of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God. (Acts 6:1-6)

Today, deacons need a clear sense of the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

They need strength and power of God's reconciling presence to transform them into persons capable of working with God in His ministry to others.

It is through God's indwelling Holy Spirit that deacons grow as persons and grow in their ability to minister to the needs of others.

Sin creates a barrier to experiencing God's presence.

Man's problem is rebellion and this sin separates him from God.

Sin hurts the fellowship between man and God. (Isa. 59:1-2)

But rather than spending his time making people feel guilty, Jesus helped them clarify the source of their guilt and the nature of their real problem.

Sin causes separation from God which causes a division within one's self.

This means a person is not what he can be or what he ought to be.

God gives a promise for those who find themselves in this dilemma.

That promise is Salvation to those who recognize their sin has separated them from God.

That promise is restoration for those who have sought God's forgiveness through their confession of sin.

Remember, since the barriers are all man-made, God's forgiveness is necessary.

Forgiveness means that the past is released and is no longer a barrier that keeps the person from experiencing God's presence.

I John 1:9, ***“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”***

Prayer takes on a special meaning since communication with God is the way to grow in experiencing the intimacy of His loving and gracious presence.

Too often our motivation to pray is based on its practical value. “Prayer changes things” is a phrase that we have heard so many times. But the real truth is “Prayer changes us.”

Such an emphasis on prayer is either that prayer is the way God influences or inspires man or that it is the way one informs, influences, or persuades God.

However, both of these emphasizes miss the primary purpose of prayer as conversation with God to build the relationship and to enjoy His presence.

NOTE – The person desiring spiritual growth must learn how to make time for God.

Prayer does not bring God's Holy Spirit, but through prayer, a person can become aware of God's constant presence.

Mediation is vitally important if one wants to grow personally and spiritually.

Our minds already practice meditation every day. We are always thinking about something.

A deacon is to be full of the Holy Spirit.

The evidence of the deacon's growth in experiencing God's presence is the life he lives before Jesus and others.

SECOND - Growth in seeing from God's perspective.

When the Jerusalem church set apart new leaders, they needed men who not only were full of the Holy Spirit but also were full of wisdom.

Christ, in Mark 8:17-18, 21, warns His followers to see as God sees, to see from God's perspective.

God gift wisdom to those who are close to Him.

God's give of wisdom includes:

Factual knowledge

Experiential understanding

Discernment and insight

These are provided to us by the Holy Spirit.

When James wrote (1:5) that anyone desiring to have wisdom needs to ask God, he was not speaking of just pastor/preachers or deacons.

This wisdom is available to all Christians who desire to be close to God.

In James 3:13-18, James makes a distinction between earthly wisdom and Godly wisdom.

Earthly wisdom is motivated by selfish ambition, it creates jealousy which leads to disharmony.

Godly wisdom is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy (v17)

Isaiah 55:7-8

God's goal for His people is that they will think His thoughts and see from His perspective and thus become more like Him.

Illustration – Dr. Henry Webb gives a great example of what he is talking about on page 20 of his book by explaining about conversion. He says, “conversion is a common term used

to describe this life transforming event. The word means *to turn around or to change one's belief or view*. The same word is used in talking about converting to the metric system of measurement. A real conversion to metric means a person will think metric and not have to translate from the old terms of measuring. The goal in learning a new language is to think in that language, not just to translate from one's first language.”

Romans 12:2, Paul says, ***Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern what is that good, pleasing and perfect will of God.***

Our greatest challenge of seeing from God's perspective is to see oneself as God sees you.

It is so much easier to point out the speck in someone else's life than see the log in one's own eye (Luke 6:41).

Normally we live a life of self-deception not willing to look at our own flaws. For our willingness to admit our short-comings and our sincere desire to have the mind of Christ is essential for our spiritual growth.

We need to accept the fact that it is our responsibility that we are not where Christ desires us to be.

NOTE – An accurate view of oneself makes it possible to see others as God sees them.

James 4:3, ***You ask*** (in prayer) ***and don't receive because you ask wrongly, so that you may spend it on your desires for pleasure.***

In real prayer, we begin to think God's thoughts after Him: to desire things He desires, to love the things He loves. Progressively we are taught by the Holy Spirit to see things from God's point of view.

NOTE – See the quote by Samuel Shoemaker on Page 23 of Dr. Webb’s book.
Deacons who wish to grow toward mature faith will want to grow in seeing from God’s perspective.

THIRD – Growth in integrating faith into your life.

Deacons who have integrated their faith into their lives are seen as those who hold *the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience* (I Tim. 3:9)

So how does God’s presence and perspective become real in the deacon’s life?

Study of God’s Word is the primary way to learn God’s perspective.

A person’s response to God by faith is the door that leads to learning God’s perspective.

Faith involves giving one’s life to God with commitment and with out conditions.

Our goal is letting God rule in our life, seeking to know and live in obedience according to God’s will.

FOURTH – Growth in Demonstrating

The seven leaders that were chosen by the Jerusalem church were men of *good reputation* (Acts 6:3) or as the King James says, *honest report*.

This means they put into practice the qualities of life we looked at in the previous sections,

Stephen was brought before the religious Supreme Court (the Sanhedrin) because he was so bold in his preaching of the Gospel.

In Acts 6:15, Luke tells us that all who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at him and saw his face was like the face of an Angel.

NOTE – Those who are close to God catch and reflect His glory (Ex 34:29-30)

Becoming a deacon is awesome but with it comes a responsibility because they must reflect Jesus Christ in a brighter and more reflecting way.

Every Christian, including a deacon, is to be measured by the standard of God Himself.

The Greek word translated *perfect* means *full-grown, mature*.

NOTE – Failure lies not in the resources of God; it is man’s failure to devotion and surrender to God in Christ (page 28 in Dr. Webb’s book)

A person who has a life commitment to personal growth and maturity is always in process, under construction, to become the person God created and intended him to be.

A growing deacon will experience a tension between what he is and what God wants him to become.

In Philippians 3:14, Paul tells us that this is a process.

Paul knew what it was like to fail in the process of mature spiritual growth.

But he also knew that doing anything well requires going through the painful process of failure.

Falling down is part of the learning to walk.

NOTE – *I would have rather tried and failed than never to have tried at all.*

Paul knew his spiritual growth was a process that would require a lifelong process. He knew he had areas in his life that were places he would fail. I believe that was one reason he wrote *in my weakness He is made strong*.

People need to see someone whose life is in the process of becoming more Christ like every day.

Oh, that it would be said of us as well, *and they could tell that they had been with Jesus*.

SUMMARY – Deacons are to:
Demonstrate growth in –
Experiencing God’s presence
In seeing God’s perspective, and
Integrating faith into their life.

Thus they have the unique opportunity to model mature faith in the church.

9:45 – 10:05 BREAKOUT SESSION # ONE

10:10 – 11:00 DEACON TRAINING SESSION TWO

DEACON TRAINING SESSION THREE

DEACONS: MODEL CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE

- Both the preacher's kids and the deacon's kids are held to a different standard in the church.
 - The deacon's family faces some unique expectations because church members have developed a high view of the role of a deacon.
 - The deacon's family should not be expected to be perfect, but family members do have the opportunity to model Christian family life.
- The family life of a deacon in the early church was held to high expectations (1 Timothy 3:11-12).
 - The deacon was to be the husband of but one wife.
 - The deacon was to manage his children and family well.
 - The deacon's wife was expected to demonstrate the same high standard.
- The Biblical qualifications suggest *four* areas that deacons, potential deacons, and church members voting for deacons can use to determine who is qualified to serve as deacon:
 - The deacon's marriage
 - The deacon's mate
 - The deacon's parent-child relationship
 - The deacon's family life

THE DEACON'S MARRIAGE

Both Pastors and deacons were to have only one wife (1 Timothy 3:2, 12).

Certainly, in his cultural setting Paul meant men who were practicing polygamy, those married to more than one wife at a time, were unacceptable for those church leadership positions.

Paul's primary emphasis was that a deacon must be "a one woman man."

Usually churches will interpret this qualification to disqualify those who have been divorced and have remarried.

This view is based on the fact that Jesus strongly emphasized the sanctity of marriage (Mark 10:2-12).

Other churches agree that the idea is no divorce and no remarriage.

However, these churches say a person who has divorced can receive God's renewing forgiveness and thus is eligible for election as a deacon.

They believe that divorce is a sin and it is no different than any of the other qualifications that would violate God's law.

They believe God's forgiveness covers that sin as well.

Divorced men that are to be considered as a deacon candidate falls under the church policy – not the Biblical qualifications.

There are *two* guidelines:
The Biblical qualifications.
The church policies.

Some churches interpret “the husband of one wife” to mean all deacons should be married rather than be single.

In considering this qualification concerning marriage, churches should not limit their attention to the issue of divorce.

Many folks get focused on one part of the qualifications and fail to realize that “husband of one wife” is just one of the qualifications and that the other qualifications should get the same attention.

Paul was primarily concerned about the faithfulness by the husband and wife to their marriage relationship.

They make a commitment to each other “for better or worse.”

This means they are making a public commitment and promise to work at developing the relationship and overcoming barriers.

NOTE: Dr. Webb gives us an excellent discussion on the role both husband and wife should bring to the marriage (see page 33 of Dr. Webb's book).

THE DEACON'S MATE – (1 Timothy 3:11)

In this section Paul inserted some qualification for the “women” or the “wives.”

There have been great discussions as to whether this refers to wives of deacons or deaconesses – women deacons.

In the New Testament – the Greek word is sometimes clearly used to mean “wife.. And other times it is used to mean “woman.”

The evidence in our text clearly applies to a deacon's wife.

The discussion flows more naturally if it applies to deacons (vv 8-10), deacon's wives (v 11), and the deacon's married and family life (v 12).

There are some churches that do elect women deacons.

They base their decision on Romans 16:1.

They also point out that women are often portrayed in the New Testament in the caring role of servants consistent with the ministry tasks of deacons.

Women had roles of leadership in the early church
(Acts 18:26; 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5)

Women also have responsibilities as leaders in today's churches.

Most churches have decided to elect only men as deacons and encourage wives to serve in a team ministry with their husbands.

Certainly, Paul's primary emphasis is on qualifications.

In verse 11 Paul wrote that a deacon's wife “must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.”

A deacon's wife is expected to be "*dignified*".

They are to conduct themselves in ways that make them "*worthy of respect*".

The Greek word comes from the root word that means "godly, devout, or reverent".

This implies that they honor and serve God as a natural manner of life.

This characteristic means both deacons and wives will have the respect and confidence of their church and community.

Wives are also not to be malicious gossips.

Deacons are not to be "*double-tongued*" and the wives are not to be devil-tongued.

The Greek word is translated here as "*slanderers*" – "false-Accusers."

Deacons and their wives must be servants who build people up and not be slanderers who spread false charges that damage reputations.

The wives of deacons are also to be "*temperate*" (v 11).

They are to be "self-controlled."

They are to be "*sober*" (KJV)

Instead of being confused and rash in their decisions, they exercise self-restraint.

This quality contributes to the stability of the home and the church.

Faithfulness is another quality needed in deacons wives.

People in the church and community will look to them for an example and in times of need.

They are known for being reliable and trustworthy.

This includes loyalty to God, home, church and other people.

THE DEACON'S PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP (v 12).

Deacons are to manage their children well.

Many deacons and prospective deacons feel especially unqualified at this point.

Deacons are not going to be perfect parents, but church members facing the same struggles to be effective Christian parents will look to their deacons to see how they relate to their children.

Next, Paul discussed the relationship between parents and children (Ephesians 6:1-4). The application of the 6th Commandment to honor parents was that children should obey them.

Paul's emphasis was that children would choose to obey their parents because of their relationship with the Lord.

During a child's developing years, the primary burden of responsibility is on Christian parents.

“Fathers, do not stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”
(Ephesians 6:4)

In Ephesians 5:29, the word translated “bring up” is used to describe how a person cares for his own body and how Christ cares for the church.

Parental discipline involves setting limits or boundaries for the child and seeing that the child learns to live within those boundaries.

This includes direction, teaching, discipline, as well as setting the example for them. There must be punishment for the consequences of their choices, but there must be affirmation for the correct responses also.

The purpose of discipline is to help the child mature into a person who can, and will, discipline themselves (Hebrews 12:11).

Seeking to provide the guidance a child needs is a painful process for parents.

Training a child is not an easy task (Proverbs 22:6).

It requires a delicate balance between allowing and limits.

Ephesians 6:4 tells us that parents are not only to provide discipline but they are also to give “*instruction of the Lord.*”

This means that parenting includes discipline and direction reminding the child of what is right and wrong in the sight of God (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Parents have the responsibility for their child’s growth. They must not turn their child’s moral and spiritual development over to the school and church.

Parents are to provide the kind of guidance and home environment in which their child can learn and live according to God’s way.

Deacons are first to be servant models in their **home** before they can be servant models in the **church**

NOTE: The words of a teenage son, “*I’m glad I have Christian parents who don’t just tell me how to live, but I can see they do it as well.*”

Paul also reminds parents that continuous criticism can break their child’s spirit.

Children need parents, who will listen attentively, answer their questions, play with them, and show them respect and affection. This requires that parents, both mom and dad, make time for, and spend time with, each of their children.

THE DEACON’S FAMILY LIFE

The deacon’s family should demonstrate Christian family life through relationship, priorities in decision making, and by handling crises and problems redemptively.

One of the challenges of family life is to find the correct balance between the husband – wife relationship and the parent – child relationship.

When children observe a strong and growing bond between their dad and mom, they have a greater sense of security.

A necessary part of managing a family well is developing some structure for smooth functioning. This could include things like:

Dividing up chores;

Determining a daily schedule;

Developing family rituals;

Respecting the other's rights.

The deacon's family should provide a healthy environment that has encouraged growth in decision making, accepting responsibility, and self-discipline.

The deacon's family can help other families by displaying an appropriate balance of meaningful family life, caring ministry, and active church involvement in their own family life.

DEACON TRAINING

SESSION FOUR

DEACONS MODEL PERSONAL AND PUBLIC MORALITY

Deacons should be persons of exemplary Christian character in their personal and public lives. Paul wrote that the first-century churches expected their deacons to be persons of this kind of character (I Timothy 3:8)

These biblical expectations suggest four qualifications to identify those who would be deacons.

Deacons should have respected conduct, a controlled tongue, a Spirit-controlled body, and right priorities.

RESPECTED CONDUCT

The deacons are to be worthy of respect or dignity.
Deacons are to be serious and dignified.

In Paul's letter to Titus he wrote, "Set an example of good works yourself, with integrity and dignity in your teaching. Your message is to be sound beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about us." (Titus 2:7-8)

This means deacons will conduct themselves in a manner that will make them worthy of the respect of others.

Peter challenged his readers "Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do evil, they may, by observing your good works, glorify God."
(I Peter 2:12)

Paul encouraged Timothy to train himself in godliness.

Although training the body is important, Paul emphasized that spiritual fitness has greater benefit. Godliness is necessary both for the present life and for the life to come, (I Timothy 3:7-8).

The test of a deacon's true character is his attitude toward having his life revealed by the light. If his actions are ungodly, he will avoid being seen by others; but if he is godly, he does not seek attention but is willing to let his deeds be seen and to give God the credit, (John 3:19-21).

Deacons whose conduct is respected by others will naturally be selected to serve in roles of leadership both in their churches and in their communities. They should be encouraged to accept such responsibilities. Their dignified and godly service that glorifies God will be a source of strength and stability not only to the churches but also to their communities.

A CONTROLLED TONGUE

Deacons are not to be “*double-tongued*” (I Timothy 3:8)

This word literally means, *double worded*.

Deacons must be consistent in their speech if others are to consider them persons of integrity rather than duplicity. (Webster defines *duplicity* as “contradictory doubleness of thought, speech, or action.”)

A church does not expect deacons to be eloquent speakers, but church members do want them to speak with clarity rather than confusion.

Paul warned, “*If the trumpet makes an unclear sound, who will prepare for battle? In the same way, unless you use your tongue for intelligible speech, how will what is spoken be known?*” (I Corinthians 14:8-9)

Paul told Timothy that persons in the church who fight over words only undermine the faith of others. Instead God approves of those who can accurately proclaim God’s Word. (I Timothy 2:14-15)

Some examples from Scripture of being **double-tongued** are:

Jesus said that words are like murder and hatred (Matthew 5:21-24)

James said that words can be used to give thanks and cursing out of the same mouth.

The ninth commandment prohibits false witness (devil = false accuser)

People who use words to damage another’s reputation (Acts 4:36)

The deacons goal is to build up a person not tear them down.

People who pretend to be good but who are dishonest and deceitful are also double-tongued. Jesus called these people hypocrites (Matthew 23:23-28).

Hypocrisy is too often the source of church conflict.

Churches need deacons who are true to their word and can be trusted.

A person who cheats on his income tax or pads his expense account betrays such trust.

Deacons must also commit themselves to **confidentiality**.

They will be entrusted with the knowledge of the personal lives of church members. They should repeat confidential information only when they have permission.

James wrote that the person who is able to control what he says is able to control his whole body. He also said no one can tame the tongue, implying that such control only comes with God's indwelling presence.

The controlled tongue is compared to the bit in a horse's mouth or the rudder on a ship. Under the control of a skilled rider or pilot, the horse will obey and the ship will remain on course (James 3:2-8).

Deacons who have controlled tongues know when to speak and when to remain silent and listen.

They will sense when it is appropriate to comfort and when it is appropriate to confront.

They will seek always to speak the right word at the right time in a spirit of love.

A SPIRIT-CONTROLLED BODY

Paul indicated that first-century deacons were not to be "given to much wine" (I Timothy 3:8).

Most Baptist churches require their deacons to abstain totally from any alcoholic beverages.

Most people wish Paul had omitted "much" so this qualification would clearly support total abstinence. However, since water was relatively scarce and often polluted in biblical times, wine was used as a basic drink in everyday meals. The wine was usually fermented grape juice.

The word “*given*” is sometimes translated “*addicted*.”

Such translations may give the impression that moderate social drinking is acceptable as long as it does not lead to drunkenness or addiction. But if Paul had meant that deacons should not get drunk, he could have used the word he used other times which clearly means “intoxication” and drunkenness (Rom. 13:13; Gal 5:21)

If Paul had meant addiction, he could have used the word meaning “enslaved.” (Titus 2:3).

The word *given* means “to pay attention to” or “be concerned about”.

Apparently Paul intended to place severe limits on the use of wine by pastors (overseers/elders) and deacons.

RIGHT PRIORITIES

Deacons are not to be “*greedy of filthy lucre*” (I Timothy 3:8)

Paul intended the word *given* from the previous phrase to apply here as well. Again it means “to pay attention to” or “be concerned about.” That includes greed but is much broader.

In the qualifications for pastors, Paul used a different word meaning “free from the love of money” (I Timothy 3:3). Paul warned Timothy, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (I Timothy 6:10). Such a craving can lead persons to wander away from their faith in God.

Paul’s primary concern is that deacons have right priorities.

Their attitude toward money is a good measure of those priorities. Jesus said, “*you cannot be slaves of God and of money.*” (Matthew 6:24)

Deacons who trust God rather than money as their source of security can be free from the temptation to worship their possessions.

They find new meaning in the prayer, “Give us today our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Deacons realize that God intends for every one to have adequate food, clothing, and shelter.

The tenth commandment prohibits covetousness.

James declared that obsession for possessions distorts a person's relationship with others and with God. "You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war ... you ask and don't receive because you ask wrongly, so that you may spend it on your desires for pleasure." (James 4:2-3).

Paul demonstrated that a person does not need to despise or live for possessions. He wrote the Philippian church: "***I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content – whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.***" (Phil. 4:11-13)

The word "***filthy lucre***" means shameful monetary gain, dishonest profit, or dishonorable advantage.

Paul does not reject the value of an employee making an honest living or an employer making a fair profit. He does cause deacons to ask serious economic questions in the light of biblical principles of personal and public morality.

Deacons need to ask if their work is **honest** and **honors** God. Deacons must also examine their motives.

Are they primarily concerned only about self and family and thus willing to ignore or even take advantage of others?

However, biblical writers commend those who use their possessions, whether great or small, to help others.

Most churches expect their deacons to give at least a tithe of their income.

Tithing is one way Christians acknowledge that all income and possessions are gifts from God. Many deacons have discovered the joy of freely giving beyond the tithe for missions and other church needs. They use their time and resources quietly and generously to minister to persons. Some volunteer their special skills in their church, community, or on a mission field.

Deacons who have right priorities will be released from anxiety, selfishness, and greed.

More than anything else, Deacons will desire God's kingdom, His rule in their lives.

Paul told Timothy, "***Be an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.***" (I Timothy 4:12)

Deacons not only represent the Kingdom of God in general; they also represent their local church in the community.

Deacons have the challenge and the opportunity to model personal and public morality through respected conduct, a controlled tongue, a Spirit-controlled body, and right priorities.

The need for these characteristics to describe the life of a deacon cannot be overemphasized.

DEACON TRAINING SESSION FIVE

DEACONS WILL MODEL A LIFE OF ACCEPTANCE

Church members who vote to elect deacons carry a burden of great responsibility.

Paul knew this and wrote that potential deacons should *“be tested first if they prove blameless then they can serve as deacons”* (I Timothy 3:10)

The election of deacons is not a popularity contest.

The church should elect only those who have given evidence that they are qualified for this important role.

The church should require that the deacon candidates that they must be a member in good standing for at least one year before they are eligible.

This gives the members an opportunity to observe a person’s growth toward a maturing faith, their family life, their personal and public morality, and how they relate to others.

The testing gives the members the opportunity to observe the candidate as they set the example for the rest of the congregation.

Jesus and the New Testament writers warned that not everyone in the church is adequately living the Christian life.

Matthew 7:15-17, 21

The church must see the fruit of the potential deacon as they live their life within the church as well as in the community.

ACCEPTED BY GOD

Salvation is how one becomes a child of God.

This response includes a commitment to know and obey the will of God.

The word *tested* comes from a root word meaning watch.
The Christian lives under the watchful eye of God.

Psalms 139:1, 23-24

Living knowing God sees it all and knows all our thoughts, should be a life lived to please God.

Jesus gave Himself as the example of pleasing God through obedience to Him.
(John 8:28-29)

Churches will look for its prospective deacons among church members who are following Christ's example and thus are acceptable and pleasing to God.

ACCEPTED BY THE CHURCH

Church members have the responsibility to determine who is accepted by God and thus acceptable to the church.

Luke 14:19

He tested these oxen
Like one test drives a car ...

Church members should examine the Christian character and the ministry record of each person being considered for the role of a deacon.

Church members cannot search the heart or thoughts of a person.

They can evaluate only on the basis of words, attitudes, and actions.

They assume that the fruit they can see is evidence of a personal relationship with Christ and His church.

One of the most obvious ways church members will test potential deacons is by the attendance at church activities.

Regular participation in church ministries can reveal much about a person.

People who are faithful to the Sunday worship services communicate a desire to praise and thank God, to celebrate life with fellow Christian friends, and to be comforted and confronted by God's Word.

People attending mid-week services reveals a commitment to praying corporately for persons in the church family and a need for spiritual refreshment.

Churches should expect their deacons to make a commitment to financially support the ministries of the church at least with their tithe.

Church members should evaluate the doctrinal soundness of potential deacons

John tells us, ***Do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*** (I John 4:1)

Since deacons are to be servant models in the church, members will seek to elect those who are already ministering to the needs of people.

Members look at the support to the pastor
Members notice the practical care offered to all Christians ...

The deacon must be found blameless in ...

Church participation
Sound doctrine
Ministry to members, as also ...
The deacon must have demonstrated Christian character
Their lives should be above reproach

The deacon should not be involved in activities that would weaken their witness within the church and the community.

Paul listed things that weaken their witness or embarrasses the church.

The works of the flesh are things like quarreling, jealousy, bad temper, selfishness, dissension, factions, and envy as well as sexual immorality, idolatry, and drunkenness. (Gal. 5:19-21)

When church members must evaluate potential deacons to determine if they are acceptable to the church for the role of deacon, they should not be judgmental.

They should be aware that the standard by which deacons are measured is the same used to measure themselves.

The high expectations that the church has of its deacons are no more than God's expectations for all His children.

CONFIDENCE FOR MINISTRY

By this time Paul's readers are asking themselves, *Could anyone qualify to be a deacon?*

By their very role of being servants, deacons should not seek to lift themselves up but to serve where needed.

The results of being accepted by God and the church are not pride but confidence. Deacons who serve with confidence "acquire a good standing" in the congregation.

Serving as a deacon in the local church is not a status that lifts them above the church members but a true deacon will be a servant model to all who are in the church.

11:00 – 11:20 BREAKOUT SESSION # TWO

11:25 – 12:00 TRAINING SESSION # THREE

DEACON TRAINING SESSION SIX

DEACON MODEL MNISTRY PARTNERS

Usually the pastor looks to deacons with a great deal of fondness.

The pastor appreciates the significant role deacons have played in developing his ministry, his life, and his leadership style.

Deacons loved their pastor enough to give support and encouragement when he was discouraged.

When people were not responding the way the pastor had hoped, a deacon would help his pastor discover more realistic expectations and help him sort through what was happening.

Also, most deacons look to their pastors with a great deal of fondness and appreciation for how they have helped them grow in Christ and cared for them and their families in times of crises

Paul took seriously the relationship between the deacon and pastor and wrote, *“The pastors who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those who work in preaching and teaching.”* (1 Timothy 5:17)

Deacons with this perspective acknowledge and value the distinctive leadership role God has given their pastor.

There are a lot of the pastor/deacon jokes out there and 99 % of them are degrading.

For the most part, all those pastor-deacon jokes that play on conflict are simply not true. However, sometimes the conflict between the pastor and deacons does exist. But such conflict is no joke. It is a time of pain and tragic for all involved and should never be joked about. Rather than laughing about conflict, pastors and deacons can work at developing a healthy pastoral ministry team relationship.

In order to build a relationship as partners, pastors and deacons need:

- to drop their defenses and knock down the barriers,
- to study Scripture that teaches about biblical leadership and about partnership, and
- to reexamine interpretations of Scripture that have created incorrect distinctions between the pastor and deacons. Such distinctions have often resulted in barriers between these two church leadership roles rather than partnership and teamwork.

SHARING MINISTRY WITH THE PASTOR

The New Testament model of service points to deacons serving alongside the pastor in pastoral ministries.

NOTE – Earnest Mosley wrote: “As team leaders, the pastor is responsible for equipping deacons for their ministry and drawing on all the resources available to them for training in order that they may be able to minister with increasing effectiveness. He will guide the deacons in discovering and performing their responsibilities.”

As partners with the pastor, deacons have the privilege and opportunity to share in modeling ministry to the church.

In the next couple of chapters we will examine some ways deacons can be examples to the congregation as they carry out their duties of caring for families, proclaiming the Gospel, and leading the church.

How can the pastor and deacons work together to create a positive relationship as partners? How can they set the example for shared ministry throughout the congregation?

They can begin by following the example of Jesus as a servant leader. The pastor will not need to demand followship. He will not try to push or pull the church toward its goals. Rather, he will lead by his character, his example, and his vision.

The deacons will give up their need to run the church as a controlling board. They will seek ways to be released from managing the business of the church. This isn't because the business of the church is unspiritual or less important but because the deacons need to focus on broader ministries.

If the pastor and deacons are to form a meaningful partnership, the pastor needs to be willing to share his ministry rather than try to be the only minister and maintain control.

He will respect the deacons and have confidence in their ability to carry out their responsibilities. Of course the deacons must be willing to accept ministry without trying to grab power.

We recognize that God's work cannot be done single-handedly. There are no solo performances in the Kingdom of God.

The pastor and deacons will avoid unbiblical styles of relating.

The pastor will refuse to assume the role of chief executive officer of the corporation with the deacons being volunteer staff to carry out his directions.

The deacons will reject the role of the board of directors who are ultimately in charge of running everything, including telling the pastor what to do.

Instead they will adopt the biblical patterns of mutual submission under the Lordship of Christ.

Finally, the pastor must be responsible to equip the deacons for their ministry tasks. (Eph.4:12).

And the deacons must be willing and available to be trained as partners in ministry.

Paul wrote, “*we are God’s co-workers*” (1Cor. 3:9)

Surely the pastor and deacons, as leaders of the church, ought to be laborers together, partners with each other as they share God’s work.

When the pastor and deacons develop this kind of shared ministry, they will be setting an example of Christian unity for all Christians.

The deacons share leadership with the pastor and or staff in the work of the church as they all carry out their distinctive roles and functions.

Deacons also can encourage and work with existing church organizations, leaders, and ministries. When deacons recognize and affirm the spiritual gifts and values of all church members, they will think in terms of shared ministry and leadership.

They will find a variety of practical ways to share the work of leading, proclaiming, and caring.

To have this team relationship, a relationship as partners, the pastor and deacons first need a relationship of love.

Love means wanting God’s best for other persons.

Those who love others will spend time building them up, not tearing them down. Those who love will not be content with letting them be less than God intends.

Not only do we recognize that this partnership – this team relationship – must be based on a relationship of love, but we also recognize that it must be based on a relationship of equals.

In the church, all people are equal before God. The church belongs to God. As head of the church, all lordship and authority belongs to Christ.

In his description of the church as the body of Christ, Paul emphasizes that all members of the church are essential to the proper functioning of the body. He allows no room for attitudes of superiority (1 Cor. 12:21) or inferiority (1 Cor. 12:15-16).

What is the unique role of the pastor?

The word *pastor* means “shepherd”(Acts 20:2; Eph 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2).

The word *bishop* means “overseer” (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:3)

The third term *elder* is used interchangeable with the pastor/shepherd and overseer roles (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-3).

These titles speak of a definite leadership role. But that role is not in rank; it is in function. The leadership function of the pastor/overseer/elder is to equip and enable the rest of the congregation to do their work of ministry. (Eph. 4:12)

What is the role of the deacon?

The word *deacon* appears in our English Bible in only two passages.

In Philippians 1:1, Paul greeted the church at Philippi and specifically greeted the overseers and the deacons.

Paul gives the qualifications, first of the overseer and then of the deacons, 1 Timothy 3.

However, the word *diakonos*, which is translated “deacon” in those two Scripture passages, appears in that form and its related forms over one hundred times in the New Testament.

Usually it is translated either “**servant**” or “**minister**” “**service**” or “**ministry**” or “to serve or to minister”

Only in these two passages did the translators choose not to translate it but to create a new word.

Since in both passages Paul used *diakonos* in association with the leadership role of the overseers (pastors), he seemed to be referring to a distinctive leadership role in the church.

Thus it seemed appropriate to transliterate *diakonos* and changing it to our word “deacon” rather than to use the general term *servant* or *minister*.

Apparently as the number of believers increased and new churches were begun, God led the congregation to formalize the servant role into a more specific church leadership role.

The New Testament does not give a specific written job description for deacons.

However, the job description is in the very name itself – deacons are to be servants. They are to be ministers working alongside the pastor/overseer.

REDISCOVERING THE DEACON AS A SERVANT

At times in church history deacons have lost sight of their primary function of service.

In the book *The Emerging Role of Deacons*, Charles Dewese gives a thorough account of the changing understanding of deacon ministry through the centuries.

During the early centuries of the church’s life, deacons understood their work to be primarily practical service.

Their ministry included visiting the sick, administering the benevolence funds, providing pastoral care and preventive church discipline, assisting in the Lord’s Supper and worship, and training new converts.

Deacons in the Middle Ages from A. D. 500 to 1500 focused their work on worship.

The primary reason the servant function of the deacon diminished during this period was that the role of deacon became the first stage toward the priesthood. Instead of the church roles being only distinctive in function, they became different levels or grades of ministry. This led to sharp distinction between clergy and laity. One of the factor in the loss of the deacon’s ministry role was the rise of monastic orders that assumed responsibility for practical caring service.

A restudy of the New Testament by the Reformers in the sixteenth century led to the rediscovery of the deacon as a servant.

Both Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized the deacon's role in distributing the church's aid to the poor.

A greater involvement in business functions began to emerge in the late 1700s and continued into the twentieth century.

This led to the concept of deacons as church business managers, acting as a board of directors. As a board of directors, deacons screened all major recommendations to determine whether they should go to the congregation. They controlled the finances, facilities, and other business affairs of the church. The pastor was directly responsible to the deacons rather than to the church.

This view of deacons as church business managers tended to distract from the other areas of service previously given strong attention.

Statements such as these began to appear in church minutes and other writings: "deacons, along with other church officers, are the chief managers of the church." "The duty of deacon is to take care of secular concerns of the church." "The office of deacon is to relieve the minister from their secular concerns of the church." "A deacon's office extends only to the secular affairs of the church."

In 1846, R. B. C. Howell published one of the most detailed books written on Baptist deacons up to that time.

In this book *The Deaconship*, Howell identified the twelve with the pastor and the seven with the deacons. He designed deacons as the "financial officers of the church" and referred to them as "a board of officers, or the executive board of the church."

Based on his interpretation of Acts 6, he assigned the temporal department of the church to the deacons and the spiritual department to the pastor. Howell's book was popular and has had a continuing influence on Baptist deacons.

Howell's interpretation of Acts 6 and the role of deacons were continued by Prince E. Burroughs in his book *Honoring the Deaconship*.

Published by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, this book was the official deacon study book from 1929 to 1956.

Burroughs wrote, *As the apostles were forerunners of the pastors who later served the churches in a distinctly spiritual capacity, so these men (the seven) were beyond doubt the forerunners of the deacons who later came to serve the churches in material affairs.*

12:00 – 12:30 LUNCH

12:30 – 1:30 TRAINING SESSION FOUR

DEACON TRAINING SESSION SEVEN

DEACONS – MODEL CARE FOR FAMILIES

At the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples (John 13:34-35)

I give you a new commandment: that you love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another

The term *disciple* means *follower or learner*.

People recognized the disciple as being Jesus' disciples.

Right now they were going to be recognized as being with Jesus.

Soon, Jesus would be returning to heaven and now they were going to be recognized by the love and care they had for others.

The church has always assumed the responsibility of caring for the spiritual and physical needs of others.

Those needs can go unmet if the pastor is the only one trying to meet those needs.

NOTE – Bad reputation – “that church I wouldn't have anything to do with that church. They don't care about me – just those on the inner circle.”

This person has been neglected by some church ministry.

Many churches turn to their deacons for help in meeting the needs of church members. Some churches choose the *Deacon Family Ministry Plan*.

This plan is where each family is assigned to a deacon in hope that this reduces the possibility of church members being neglected.

Some churches choose to have a deacon of the week.

They will visit the sick and make hospital visits, as well as make contact with any guest in Bible Study and/or Worship.

Some churches choose to have deacon teams to meet various needs of members.

When deacons focus their attention on administrative duties they often neglect their caring responsibilities.

CARING AS JESUS CARED

No task is too menial for those who serve as Jesus served.

Jesus set the example by washing the feet of the disciples.

What was Jesus answer when He was asked what was the greatest commandment?

Mark 12:28-31

Jesus commissioned His disciples as partners in His caring ministry.

Deacons can set up and become those partners with the pastor in caring for the congregation and the community.

Deacons naturally feel inadequate in serving others ---

Remember – God did not choose you because of your abilities but your availability.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, deacons can be effective partners with God and the pastor in caring for families.

I Corinthians 3:9

ORGANIZING FOR CARING MINISTRY

A spirit of Christian fellowship is probably a church's most valuable resource.

Such fellowship will be attractive to people when buildings, budgets, and leadership are inadequate.

People are drawn to a caring congregation.

Deacons can organize themselves in ways to be sure that people experience that kind of love.

DEACON WELCOMING MINISTRY

One way deacons can build such a warm and friendly climate is to make both members and non-members and guests feel welcome when they attend worship.

Words of greeting and a warm hand shake contribute to a sense of togetherness.

Remember each guest that enters is a potential new Christian and/or member.

Immediate follow-up is critical!

People usually respond positively to a clear indication that they are important to each member of the church.

DEACON TEAM MINISTRY

Here deacons are divided into teams based on their personality and spiritual giftedness to meet and minister to special ministry needs.

Each team must have a clear description of responsibilities.

Some examples of the deacon teams are:

New Member Ministry Team.

The welcome and assimilate new families into the fellowship as they join the church.

After joining they are given the names of the staff and deacon body including telephone numbers.

They introduce the new families to the Bible Studies that are available to them.

They include new members in the activities and fellowships within the body.

A Crisis Ministry Team

They will minister to families facing personal or family illness, death, separation/divorce, family conflict or birth of a child.

Evangelistic and Outreach Ministry Team

They make contact with non-believers who have indicated an interest in knowing more about or becoming a Christian.

The deacon's first concern will be their relationship with Jesus Christ and then their becoming a part of the church family.

The Benevolence Ministry Team.

They will develop and implement a plan for responding to a variety of needs that arise in which families cannot handle.

This team becomes familiar with the resources available in the church and community to meet such needs.

The Homebound Ministry Team

This team develops a plan for regularly visiting members who are confined to their homes, nursing facilities, or senior living center.

A Community Newcomers Ministry Team

This team finds ways to reach out to individuals and families that are moving into the area.

An Inactive Member Ministry Team

This team makes the effort to contact each one of the church inactive members to determine what ministry is needed.

DEACON FAMILY MINISTRY PLAN

This plan provides an organized way to handle the deacon care ministry.

The plan is a simple device that helps to reduce the possibility of people failing to receive the love, care, and concern that are needed.

Basically, the Deacon Family Ministry Plan involves dividing the church families into equal groups and assigning a deacon to each group.

Each deacon accepts the responsibility to see that their assigned families receive the love and care available in the congregation

Each deacon accepts the responsibility to minister to the needs of a group (ten-fifteen families).

Each deacon accepts the responsibility for personal ministry to be assigned for a period of time usually a year of the rotation term of the deacon.

The division of the families is often made by geographical location.

However any plan that meets the church's need is acceptable.

The plan provides a growing relationship between the deacon body and every member of every family in the church.

When done correctly, the *Deacon Family Ministry Plan* will allow the whole church fellowship to be strengthened.

DEACON YOKEFELLOW MINISTRY

Some church deacons enlist yokefellow which are deacons-in-training which work with their deacon sponsors in ministering to persons.

The Yokefellow Ministry has a number of advantages.

FIRST – Often a deacon needs a second person to go on a visit.

SECOND – It doubles the numbers of people involved in the deacon ministry to the congregation.

THIRD – This partnership works whether the deacons are serving on ministry teams or have families assigned to them.

FOURTH – The congregation has an opportunity to observe the yokefellows to determine if they would be good candidates to serve in the Deacon Body.

FIFTH – It provides an excellent in-service training for potential deacons.

SIXTH- A newer deacon can enlist a deacon who has rotated off the active deacon body as his yokefellow in order to gain from the deacon's greater experience.

SEVENTH – Those who are ineligible to serve as a deacon (minimal age-length as church member, etc) can serve as a yokefellow.

DEACON'S MINISTERING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

During a crisis families will see their deacon as a friend they can count on because he has demonstrated that he cares.

A crisis in one's life is a turning point - a decisive moment for good or bad. These events change a person's life forever.

During a crisis a person is making life-shaping decisions and responses.

The deacon's ministry goal is to enable the person or family to use such experiences to deepen personal growth and strengthen relationships.

Ministry in times of crisis begins with the deacon's availability and his initiative.

Because the deacon has already established a caring relationship, the person facing the crisis often feels the freedom to call for help.

To know when the deacon should take initiative requires being sensitive to the person in crisis and others as well.

Deacons need to develop the ability and sensitivity to pick up even the slightest signals of calls for help.

Often the deacon's wife will pick up on this before the deacon will --- "listen to her."

Experience and common sense are often all a deacon will need to be aware that a church family member needs someone to care.

A family in crisis needs the strength and confidence that the deacon's stable family and home has to offer.

When the deacon is called upon to minister in a family crisis, they often respond by asking themselves "what will I say?"

The right question is "How will I Listen?"

Listening is the most effective way a deacon can minister.

Listening allows the person in crisis to express their feelings.

They need this more than they need explanations or simple answers to difficult questions.

MOTTO – People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

The well-intended offer, *let me know how I can help* often places more burden on the person going through a crisis.

Usually a friend or the deacon himself will see things that need to be done before there is any verbal communication.

The purpose of such help is not to feel useful but to meet real needs.

The deacon should keep the pastor informed or involved in these ministry needs.

Persons often need continued ministry after the immediate crisis has settled.

A good follow-up ministry is vital in order to maintain the healthy relationship with the families.

Sensitive deacons will discover far more needs than they can adequately meet personally.

Therefore priorities must be set and kept.

NOTE – The Holy Spirit will not only provide the strength for caring but also will give guidance in deciding when and how to minister.

BREAKOUT SESSION # FOUR 1:30 – 1:45

1:45 – 2:30 TRAINING SESSION # FIVE

DEACON TRAINING SESSION EIGHT

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

Deacons will come to know the families including their children, teenagers, and friends who are not Christians.

Contact with these families and friends will provide opportunities to help Christians apply the Gospel in their everyday lives.

From the seven deacons chosen and set apart we know that at least two of those men proclaimed the Gospel to crowds of people and to an individual person.

These two set a good example for deacons to follow in their task of proclaiming the Gospel to believers and unbelievers.

Luke first mentions Stephen in Acts 6:11-7:60.

Next Luke calls attention to Philip in Acts 8:5-13

PROCLAIMING AS JESUS PROCLAIMED

Deacons find Jesus as the best example for their proclaiming Ministry.

Jesus knew His mission was to proclaim the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43).

Jesus was willing to cross the barrier of social and religious prejudice to give new life to those seeking to have eternal life.

An example of this is when He met the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:5-29.

Jesus reached across the barriers of race, religion, sex, and morality to share how she could become a true believer.

SHARING GOOD NEWS WITH UNBELIEVERS

At the close of His ministry, Jesus commissioned His followers to continue His ministry of proclamation.

In John 20:21, Jesus said, *just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*

Later in Galilee, He told them, *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the ends of the ages.* (Matthew 28:19-20)

Acts 1:8 is how Jesus said it will be done.

Deacons share with all Christians the commission to witness.

Jesus never intended for this important task to be limited to pastoral preaching from the pulpit.

All Christ followers have been given this commission.

They may proclaim the Gospel through private conversations, public presentations, or written communications.

Deacons should not excuse themselves from the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Deacons will be given the opportunity to stand in the pulpit and proclaim God's message.

TEACHING BELIEVERS THE CHRISTIAN WAY

Deacons not only share with all Christians the commission to witness and to preach, but they also have the commission to make disciples.

The teaching ministry of Jesus was also emphasized by the Gospel writers.

Teaching is proclaiming the Christian way of life to those who are already disciples of Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught about the meaning of living a life in God's will to those who believed and were committed to living the Christian life.

Many deacons teach individuals the Christian way through Bible Study, discipleship groups, or mission organizations in their churches.

Deacons are sometimes used to counsel individuals who make decisions during the worship service.

Deacons also teach by modeling growth to those who are watching their personal and public life.

DECLARING GOD'S WORD TO THE COMMUNITY

In John 17:14-18, Jesus said that He was sending His disciples into the world but they were not of the world.

The church is to demonstrate love and concern for the community, but it must not take on the attitudes and morals of the community.

At times it is necessary for a church to challenge community standards, policies, and plans in our community.

The prophets, Apostles, and Jesus were willing to proclaim God's Word against political, economic, social, and religious corruption and oppression.

Sometimes a deacon will be led by God to speak prophetically.

They need to be sensitive to opportunities to make their voices heard at appropriate times and in appropriate ways.

When deacons accept the challenge to share the Good News with unbelievers, teaching believers the Christian Way, and declaring God's Word to the community, they will recognize their need for growth in knowing and understanding the Message God wants them to proclaim.

Personal Bible Study, Sunday School classes, and discipleship will become even more important to these deacons.

Deacons will also take advantage of special studies of the Bible, specific doctrines, and the issues Christians are facing.

God can and will greatly use deacons who are willing to model proclamation of the Gospel.

DEACON TRAINING SESSION NINE

DEACON MODEL OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

Deacons are a part of the Pastoral Ministry team of the church.

Their primary responsibilities are caring for church members and other people in the community as well as proclaiming the gospel to both believers and unbelievers.

The deacons also share with the pastoral staff the responsibility of leading the church in achieving the church's mission.

Some churches have assigned primarily business management responsibilities to their deacons.

This workload tends to dominate the time and energy of the deacons.

They find themselves unable to fulfill other leading, caring, and proclaiming responsibilities adequately.

Therefore, an increasing number of churches are deciding against having the deacons serve as the business administrators of the church or having them screen committee actions as a church board of directors.

Churches are assigning specific responsibilities to appropriate church committees and coordinating responsibilities with the church leadership team.

These churches are finding this approach is more likely to assure that families receive adequate care from a loving congregation, that the necessary administration of the church is handled efficiently, and that the good news of Christ is consistently shared with believers as well as unbelievers.

The shift of responsibility strengthens rather than weakens the leadership role of deacons.

They have the broader opportunity to exert leadership in the spirit of humble servants.

This type of leadership is for the purpose of building a fellowship that brings people together.

Deacons who take their leadership role seriously can help their church accomplish God's purpose.

LEADING AS JESUS LED

Leaders base their style of leadership primarily on the heroes or models they choose.

There are a wide variety of heroes that the media, movies, and sports figures have produced in America.

However, as a Christian leader- Jesus Christ is the primary model for deacons.

Leaders get carried away with their own importance.

Example- I was once told, “Put your finger in a bucket of water and pull it out quickly, then notice how big a hole you left.”

Pastoral leadership teams need to understand and practice what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:3

“Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.”

Paul then points to Jesus as the supreme example of this attitude of humility that is essential to Christian leadership.

Philippians 2:6-11

We find that Jesus did not seek to exalt Himself.

“He, the Son of the Most High God, took on the role of a servant.”

Jesus warned the crowds and His disciples to avoid following the leadership style of their religious leaders who tried to impress others with their prestige and importance.

Jesus felt that the issue of servant leadership was so important that when he came to the close of His ministry, He wanted to drive home His message one more time.

The setting was in the “***Upper Room***” and we know this as the Last Supper.

After the meal, Jesus took a towel and a pan of water and one by one He washed the disciples feet.

When Jesus completed His task, John writes what Jesus said to them.

John 13:12-16

Jesus is the deacon's model for Christian leadership.

He taught that a leader is able to be "strong" without being harsh, gentle without being weak, caring without being sentimental, and forgiving without being spineless.

LEADING AS SERVANTS

Deacons are church leaders, but they are also to be servants.

People usually think of a leader as someone who is in charge of other people and a servant as someone who is somewhere down below helping people.

The world has a hard time merging these two concepts, and calls someone as a servant leader.

However, that is exactly what the role of a deacon is - a servant leader.

Jesus' own disciple had a problem with this. They began to argue which of them would be the greatest.

Even a mom approached Jesus wanting to have her two boys set in a place of prestige with Jesus.

Jesus responded to those selfish ambitions ---

Luke 9:48

Mark 9:35

Mark 10:32-41

The word "*servant*" is the same word translated as "*deacon*."

Mark 10:42-45

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus was not abolishing leadership and authority.

Lack of leadership always creates organizational chaos.

Leadership is strictly a matter of function, and that function is to serve.

Servant leadership focuses not on superiority over others but on partnership and sharing to accomplish what needs to be done.

A leader is someone who has followers.

This definition eliminates the autocratic dictator. It eliminates those who want to control.

They do not have followers - they have subjects.

A leader has voluntary followers.

These followers voluntarily submit to influence but not control.

That move from influence to control usually begins, not as a power grab by those who would lead, but from people who want to give away their responsibility.

That is a major cause for deacons functioning in the congregation in the role of a controlling board of directors.

The deacons “*run the church.*”

Howard Foshee suggest *three* ways to tell that deacons are functioning as a controlling board:

FIRST - When all major recommendations from church organizations and church committees are screened by the deacons to determine whether they should go to the congregation.

SECOND - When the pastor and staff members are directly responsible to the deacons rather than to the church.

THIRD - When the use or expenditures of major church resources, such as facilities and finances, must first be approved by the deacons.

Howard Foshee, “The Ministry of the Deacon”, p. 33

The “**board**” role did not begin as a power grab on the part of the deacons.

See Henry Webb - page 111, second paragraph.

There are *problems* with the role “**Board of Deacons**”.

FIRST Problem – Is that the people are giving away a responsibility that they have no right to give away.

SECOND Problem- Is that the deacons accept that responsibility.

When deacons function as a controlling Board of Directors, they are in direct contradiction of the Baptist way of church government.

Baptist have had a strong, historical commitment to congregational decision-making.

The people have shunned their responsibility.

Another reason that deacons functioning as a Board are not really serving their congregation despite their good intention, is that controlling is never real servant leadership.

Usually, what people need is not just making the right decisions –
It is learning how to make decisions.

Deacons can help people in decision making without making the decisions for them.

The greatest service to the congregation is when the deacons guide them through a decision making process.

Jesus would have His leaders to be servants and not supervisors or controllers.

He would want His leaders to use leadership to influence others to determine for themselves the best procedure to take.

The servant isn't concerned with whether he succeeds or fails.

The servant is concerned with whether he is being obedient to the Master in carrying out the assigned task and whether he is being a good steward of the resources that the Master has placed at his disposal to carry out the assigned task.

In 1 Timothy 3:13, Paul concludes with these words, *Those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves.*

Jesus said, *if you want to be first, be a servant.*

SERVING AS ENABLING LEADERS

Although the Pastor as the overall leader of the congregation has a distinctive equipping ministry, the deacons are in a unique position to model an enabling style of servant ministry.

Every Christian can and should seek to become a mentor and enable others.

Paul wrote that the purpose of Christian leadership is to train God's people, *in the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ*.

When church members respect and trust their leaders, they accept their influence.

Church members respect deacons who are dedicated Christians, caring ministers, and enthusiastic supporters of the church.

They will trust deacons who show love and acceptance, keep confidence, meet their needs, and impress them as genuine.

Church members will respect leaders who demonstrate humble confidence and boldness based on a trust in God's power available to all His people.

They reject leaders who display arrogant confidence based on a sense of possessing power in ways not available to others.

Deacons exercise their enabling leadership by helping members discover opportunities to develop and use their Spiritual gifts, talents, skills, and abilities God has given them.

Deacons also lead through their examples of support for the church's ministry and leaders.

As deacons develop a significant relationship with families, they can be a natural communication channel for the church.

Deacons can also clarify and interpret church ministries to the church families to enable understanding, and they can challenge and excite them to encourage support.

Deacons can help preserve church fellowship when conflict threatens.

Deacons are sometimes called on to keep "*the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us*" (Eph 4:3)

Henry Webb – page 116 second paragraph

Effective Christian leaders will do what needs to be done when it needs to be done.

They will lead aggressively in Christ-like Spirit of humble servants.

This kind of leadership can enable persons to grow and the church to achieve its mission.

The church's mission includes evangelizing to increase the number of believers, maturing persons in Christian faith, improving the quality of fellowship in the congregation, encouraging ministry inside and beyond the church, and focusing worship to glorify God.

When deacons model Christian leadership in their churches, they inevitably will find themselves seen as enabling leaders in their homes, on their jobs, and in community organizations.

As these deacons are observed, some will be asked to assume important roles of leadership in their community, state, nation, and even the international community.

God uses deacons who model Christian character and leadership to accomplish His Kingdom purposes in individual lives and in churches; in organizations such as schools, businesses, and civic clubs; in government; and in society in general.

Churches should give these deacons encouragement and continuing prayerful support as they have broader opportunities to model the Christian life applied to leadership.

DEACON TRAINING WRAP UP 2:30 – 2:45

DEACON TRAINING SESSION TEN

Conclusion

Who a deacon is will be the foundation for what a deacon does!!!!

God has set the bar pretty high for what He expects to be the qualities for the men called out by God and elected by the church.

The congregation looks to their deacons to serve as models, as examples, of the quality of Christian living that God expects of all Christians.

The qualities of deacons who are serving as models in the church are grouped into four characteristics.

Deacons will demonstrate growth ---
Toward spiritual maturing faith
Toward Christian family life
Toward personal and public morality
Toward a life accepted by God and the church.

What deacons do is found in the very name itself --- **DEACONS ARE TO BE SERVANTS.**

Deacons are ministers working along side the pastor and staff caring for both the congregation and the community.