

# Church 101

## Lesson 7

### Deacons

#### PART I EXPLANATION

**Introduction:** The second office in the New Testament church is the office of a deacon. In recent times this office has been misunderstood and misused in ways detrimental to the church. However, when rightly understood and applied, a biblical deacon is a tremendous blessing and asset to the ministry of the church. The three primary distinctions to be made concerning this office are the Scriptural function, appointment, and qualifications of deacons.

The biblical function of a deacon is not to keep the pastor in check. There was a specific purpose in creating this office: to oversee the temporal affairs of the church so that the elders could be completely devoted to the spiritual aspects i.e. prayer and the ministry of the word. These two offices work together to provide for the proper spiritual and physical maintenance of the flock. We should appreciate the Divine wisdom in instituting the offices of the church to maintain a balanced provision for our physical and spiritual needs.

The Bible also gives clear instruction about the appointment of deacons. To often the appointing of deacons becomes a popularity contest and the position is desired for the sake of preeminence; which is the exact opposite of the design of the position. A deacon is the position of a servant. The word deacon means servant. In Acts chapter six we read of the original appointment of deacons and from there we can learn the Divine intention for this office.

The office was created when important matters, such as the feeding of widows, were being neglected. When this concern was voiced to the elders, they responded by creating an office specifically to provide for the need. If there is no need, it is asking for trouble to create a position with no specific job description, requirements, or responsibilities. When the elders were confronted with this need, they determined how many people were necessary to adequately oversee the work. In this instance they determined that the work was extensive enough to require seven men. Upon this determination, they returned to the congregation with their recommendation. In addition, they instructed the church of the necessary qualifications for one to represent the church in this capacity.

There are two primary qualifications given in Acts 6 which are further elaborated in I Timothy 3. The two qualifications for this position are: their reputation “of honest report” and their spirituality “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom”. It shows the seriousness in which the early church viewed even the temporal affairs of the church that they would require such men to fill the position. The qualifications of a bishop and a deacon are strikingly similar. One requirement emphasized is for the deacon’s wife because deacons will be exposed to private matters (such as individual’s finances) which could lead to serious problems if she is involved in gossip and slander. The only thing not required of a deacon that is required of a bishop is that they be apt to teach. Only those meeting these Scriptural qualifications should be considered for this office.

In Acts 6, the elders suggested the number required for the work, the church was responsible for selecting men meeting the qualifications explained by the elders. The church selected the men and the elders ordained them by the laying on of hands. Notice the great checks and balances between the elders and the congregation to ensure the purity of this office.

**Definitions:** *For English use the Webster’s 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong’s Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong’s number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Deacon** -

Greek: (1249) **diakonos** *dee-ak'-on-os* -

**Quotation:**

“The organization of the church, as it respects its officers, is thus one of divine simplicity and effectiveness. The natural and obvious division of its work – committing the spiritual supervision to the pastors, and the temporal to the deacons – secures the highest efficiency, while it gives no stimulus to the clerical pride and ambition so manifest under hierarchical systems.” Hezekiah Harvey

“The apostles set the deacons in their office, or ordained them, as we see in verse six, this being the meaning of “appoint” in verse three; but the apostles did not presume to select them. They left this to the church. They did not even recommend to the church the ones they should elect. They left the church to find this out from the Holy Spirit. This was an exceedingly important matter, but the apostles were not afraid to trust it to the church. This is an excellent example of the democracy of New Testament churches.” TP Simmons

“A deacon must not be a man that has an inordinate love of money. If he is he will likely misappropriate funds entrusted to him. Great has been the shame brought upon churches because men greedy of filthy lucre have been entrusted with church funds.” TP Simmons

“In general a Deacon owes the same service to the Lord and bears the same responsibility as does every Christian. He, however, is one upon whom special responsibility has been laid. The Church as is true of every institution in this world, needs leaders. Men upon whom special responsibility can be placed without being shunned or evaded and in whom there can be found to be to an outstanding degree the qualities of the real Christian character.” Roy Cogdill

**Confessions** (Look up and read these articles)

**New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith of 1833**

Article XIII A New Testament Church

**London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**

Chapter 26 Of The Church - paragraphs 8-9

**PART II EXPLORATION**

**Key Questions** (*Answer in writing*)

1. What are the two offices in the New Testament church?
2. What is the primary function of the deacon?
3. What determines when a church should have deacons?

4. Who determined how many deacons were needed?
  
5. Who nominated the deacons?
  
6. How did the elders signify their acceptance of the nominations?
  
7. What are the two primary qualifications of a deacon?
  
8. What two qualifications for a deacon are different from those of a bishop?
  
9. Why is it required that a deacon not be covetous?
  
10. Why are there qualifications for the deacon's wife?

**Key Scriptures:** (*Look up these verses and fill in the blanks*)

Philippians 1:1 The church was addressed as having bishops and \_\_\_\_\_ .

I Timothy 3:8-16 The qualifications for a deacon are that he must be serious and must not be:

\_\_\_\_\_, given to \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_. Any of these attributes will eventually bring shame to the office and the church. He must be stable in his beliefs, knowing why he believes what he believes with a clean \_\_\_\_\_. Before they are to placed into the office they must first be \_\_\_\_\_ blameless. It is also expected that their \_\_\_\_\_ meet the qualifications and that their home is in order. There is a reward promised to those who use the office \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Key Chapter(s)** (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):

Acts 6:1-7

**PART III EXPECTATION**

**Memory verse:** I Timothy 3:10

**Personal definition:** *(Write a definition in your own words)*

Deacon -

**Personal confession:** *(Study the confessions and summarize them in your own words)*

The office of a deacon -

**Meditation question:** *(be prepared for discussion)*

How could the degradation of the office of a deacon lead to men entering the ministry without a divine calling?

**Extra Credit:**

Do you feel that you meet the qualifications of a deacon/deacon's wife? If not what areas need improvement? Ask your spouse and a close friend if they see any area in your life that is deficient in these areas.