

## THE DUTIES OF A DEACON

### *Acts 6:1-7*

I do not wish to begin a study with a negative statement, but there is the need to make one before going into the heart of this study. In the course of my 40 year ministry, I've seen several good men ruined by being made a deacon.

This is sad and tragic, but nevertheless, often true. It shouldn't be that way. Being ordained as a deacon should not elevate a man, but instead humble him.

The reason many men are ruined is they are elected as a deacon, but are not taught or understand their duties and responsibilities. They know they are supposed to do something, but they don't know what. Therefore, they seek to do something and end up taking power and authority that doesn't rightfully or biblically belong to them, and which they are not entitled. Other deacons don't do anything rather than do something wrong.

### I. ARE DEACONS NEEDED TODAY?

#### A. The Church At Jerusalem – Arguments Against Having Deacons Today

1. Many people say there is not a need, and use Jerusalem as the reason.
  - a. *Acts 2:41* - 3,000 saved and added to church
  - b. *Acts 2:47* – added daily
  - c. *Acts 4:4* – 5,000 more saved and added
  - d. *Acts 5:14* – multitudes
  - e. *Acts 6:1* – multiplied
  - f. Estimates range from 20,000 to over 100,000
2. The uniqueness of the church.
  - a. Everyone sold all their possessions and gave to the church
  - b. Their daily necessities were given such as they needed
  - c. It was a full time job with that many people
  - d. More work than the apostles could handle
3. Deacons started and stopped.
  - a. Deacons elected solely to serve tables
  - b. When church scattered – so did deacons
  - c. When Stephen was killed – he was never replaced

So, if we are going to have deacons, we must also have that large of a church, all things in common, and they could only serve tables.

#### B. The Church At Philippi – Arguments For Having Deacons Today

##### *Philippians 1:1*

1. Letter written by Paul to Timothy to:
  - a. Saints . . . at Philippi
  - b. Bishops
  - c. Deacons
2. Surely the church was not as large as the church at Jerusalem.

3. They did not have "*all things in common*".
4. Doubtfully they only served tables.

C. Qualification:

1. *I Timothy 3:8-13*
2. Qualifications are similar to those of a pastor.
3. Why give any qualifications since the church did not have as many members as the church of Jerusalem nor did they have "*all things common*".
4. Why give such high qualifications for an office that no one was going to need?

**II. THEIR DUTIES: - FIRST WE WILL LOOK AT THE - NEGATIVE:**

A. They Are Not The Pastor:

1. The pastor is the highest office in the church. He is the under-shepherd of God and shepherd of the church.
2. The pastor is the only one told to rule.
  - a. Pastor alone is responsible to feed and shepherd the flock
  - b. The pastor alone will give an account to God for the flock

B. Deacons Are Not The "Ruling Board" Of A Church

1. The Lord's church is autonomous – self governing. The authority lays in the church, not a deacon, or a deacon board.
2. Deacons are not to dictate the church's direction.
  - a. We will do such and such – buy or build
  - b. We will not do such and such
3. Deacons can't decide all church business.
  - a. Obviously somebody has to handle the thousand and one trivial questions
  - b. But even then church can set a limit
4. Anything the deacons recommends – the church can ignore or void if it so chooses.

C. They Are Not To "Govern" The Pastor

1. They cannot hire and fire the pastor.
2. They cannot tell the pastors what to preach or not preach.

3. The pastor does not answer to deacons, but only to the church as a whole.

### III. THEIR DUTIES - POSITIVES

#### A. To Serve Tables – This was done in *Acts*.

1. The table of the poor -
  - a. Even the poor have a certain amount of pride
  - b. To discuss their poverty before whole church would be extremely embarrassing
  - c. Within reason, deacons should see that member's needs are met
2. The Lord's table -
  - a. Does not have to be deacons
  - b. If possible deacons should, but it is not required in the Bible
3. The Pastor's table -
  - a. Keep up with basic needs as much as possible
  - b. As much as possible see that his needs are met

But this is not all their jobs in *Acts* – nor are they the most important.

#### B. Freeing The Pastor - *VS:2, 4*

1. Duties the Pastor's must do.
  - a. Visit the sick
  - b. Visit prospects
  - c. Problems to consider and hopefully solve
  - d. Counsel those who need it
  - e. Study and prepare sermons and Bible studies x 3
  - f. Study to teach Sunday School lessons
  - g. NOTE: The numerical size of the church has nothing to do with the amount of time needed to study and prepare to teach and preach the Word of God, UNLESS the church wants leftovers or a bologna sandwich
2. Pastor's other duties – (sometimes).
  - a. Oversee finances
  - b. Oversee building upkeep
  - c. Investigate any business that comes up
  - d. Plus hundreds of other odd and end jobs
3. How can deacons help.
  - a. Can handle all the trivial details under his supervision
  - b. Stay on top of the needs of the church – then inform pastor
  - c. They can handle some personal differences – then inform or check with the pastor
  - d. Anything that can help the pastor to be free to carry out his God-given responsibilities

4. The duties of the pastor did not change with deacons. He is simply free to do them.
5. There must be a very close working relationship with the pastor.
  - a. Pastor must be able to trust their ability to handle matters
  - b. Pastor must trust their backing abilities – to not undermine, but work with him

#### C. Promoters Of Church Harmony – *verse 1*

1. Of necessity – must be a spiritual man.
  - a. A man who can pray about problems
  - b. A man who can look at both sides with an open mind and apply biblical principles and biblical truths to each situation
  - c. A man who can remain calm in the middle of a war
2. Example of peace keepers:
  - a. Church at Jerusalem – murmuring
  - b. Deacons elected to help solve the problem
3. May need to recommend discipline to keep peace in church.
  - a. *Matthew 18:15-17*
  - b. Two or three witnesses don't have to be deacons
4. It means keeping the pastor informed.
  - a. Deacons can see and hear more than the pastor
  - b. Therefore, they can see and hear trouble before the pastor (most often)
  - c. It is not gossip when deacons (or any other member) "squeals" to preserve peace and harmony in the church
5. Deacons lose their right "to speak his mind".
  - a. Deacons should never lead in factions or squabbles
  - b. They should never be found sowing discord
  - c. May not always agree, but differences should be dealt in deacon's meetings not in front of the church
  - d. But, when speaks publicly – he is to be towards harmony

#### D. Care For The Welfare Of The Church Membership

1. Jerusalem's need was food.
2. Today – needs vary widely among membership.
  - a. May need financial assistance
  - b. May need financial advice
  - c. May just need someone to visit and talk - *James 1:27*

#### E. To Give A More Effective Witness

1. They become a faithful witness.
2. They help others become better witness.

3. They help by solving problems that can destroy witness of the church or of the individual.

#### F. They Give Stronger Leadership

1. To a large extent, deacons are leaders.
  - a. All of their efforts should be to lead the church forward under the leadership of the pastor
  - b. If it is scriptural, Holy Spirit led, and will advance the church deacons should help lead others
2. Help have a stronger Pastor.
  - a. Pastor needs men he can trust to delegate as leaders
  - b. Pastor needs men he can turn to for advice and help to reach decisions according to the Word of God for what is best in the Lord's church
3. By advising and helping the pastor, they can help the church go forward.

#### G. Serving The Church

1. Wherever or however they are needed.
2. They carry out the direction of the church.
3. They often get stuck with a lot of "dirty work".
4. But, they are servants and are to serve the church. When deacons forget they are servants then the pastor and the church have problems!

#### H. Help The Pastor

1. Help with decisions and problems. When they become the problem they need to be removed from the position of leadership.
2. Help the pastor by taking a load off his back.
3. Help keep him free to do his Biblical duties.
4. Sometimes, help by having a shoulder to lean on. Must be able to maintain confidentiality and never become a gossiper.

### IV. THE REWARD OF A DEACON: - *I Timothy 3:13*

#### CONCLUSION:

No where in the Bible are churches commanded to ordain deacons. Oftentimes, churches ordain men who are not qualified, and eventually suffer as a result of ignoring the commands and qualifications of God's Word for deacons.

Oftentimes, trustees have replaced the positions in the church and even they should meet great standards before being elected to that position.

In lesson two we will continue the study of deacons and get more serious as to the qualification of a deacon. They are straight forward and self explanatory and are to be followed in order to be in obedience to God's Word.