

Mercy's Minister ~ the Importance of the Deacon

September 16, 2012

1. Introduction

2. We Believe Scripture Establishes the Role of Deacon in the NT Church

* 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Philippians 1:1,

* these passages indicate that two distinct offices were part of the NT church.

* **Excursus:** what about Acts 6?

3. We Believe the Deacon is Called by Jesus Christ to Serve

* At the heart of diaconate ministry, is the call to serve

* Jesus sometimes used the word "deacon" to describe his own ministry (Mark 10:43-45, Luke 22:27; Rom. 15:8)¹

* The supreme mark of an individual called by Jesus Christ to serve as a deacon is a quality of character that faithfully reflects the character of Jesus Christ, and effectively serves the people of God. Deacons serve because Jesus first served them.

* Deacons practically serve needy people to demonstrate God's heart of mercy and love

4. The Biblical Data

"Both the noun diakonia and verb diakoneo are used in the New Testament, not only in the sense of general service but in the narrower, even technical, sense of attending to people's bodily sufferings and material needs."

*"Diakonos— both broadly used in the NT as 'servant;' narrowly used in Scripture for the office of deacon."*²

The office of deacon was created to designate a group of people who would be responsible to practically care for the needs of the church so that the elders could devote their time to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Succinctly stated, the office of deacon in the church is not a ruling office but a **servicing office**. However, the deacons close association with the pastors indicates that their ministries are complementary. Whereas a pastor(s) serves through the ministry of the word, prayer and is ultimately responsible for overseeing the affairs of the church. The deacons serve to meet the practical needs of people in the church.

We believe deacons are subordinate to pastoral oversight and leadership. Even though deacons primarily serve people in the church, Scripture and church history seem to leave room for deacons to serve the poor outside the church as well.

¹ Ryken, Dr. Phillip Graham, *1 Timothy*, (New Jersey: P & R Publishing), pg. 135

² Strauch, Alexander, *Minister of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon*, (Lewis & Roth Publishers:1992), pg. 72

5. The Preeminence of Character

- * the traits listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 cover the whole spectrum of a person's life
- * there are to be the presence of these traits, not their perfection
- * these traits are marks of God's grace in a person's life

"It is the Holy Ghost who is the immediate, peculiar sanctifier of all believers and the author of all holiness in them" - John Owen

- * these traits require time to be proven, and a context in which to identify them

Deacons likewise must be ...

a. dignified, not double-tongued

b. not addicted to much wine

c. not greedy for dishonest gain.

*d. **they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.***

*e. **tested first**; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.*

f. their wives must be dignified, not slanderers, sober-minded, faithful in all things.

g. the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.

6. The Role of the Deacon at Crossway Church

The role of the deacon(s) was created to care for the practical needs of the church, so that the pastors/elders could devote their time to ministry of the word and prayer. Succinctly stated, the office of the deacon is not a ruling office, but a **servicing office**. The pastors oversee and teach and the deacons serve to meet the practical needs of people in the congregation, subordinate to the pastors oversight and leadership.

The office of deacons exists to serve the pastoral team in meeting the practical needs of the church in support of its mission.

Here are 6 practical areas of service we want our deacons to serve in:

Practical Needs: The root of the word deacon means minister or servant, and particularly was used of table-waiters at the time, or of various types of service, usually either physical or financial. Deacons serve the congregation in whatever practical needs may arise.

Physical needs: Deacons are to care for the physical needs of the church congregation. It is important to note that the deacons likely didn't do all the serving themselves; rather the deacons probably organized many other Christians in the church, through our care groups, to ensure that the work would be done.

Benevolence: The deacons will be involved in distributing funds or other assistance to the needy in our congregation. This would include distributing our benevolence fund, in conjunction with the pastors review and oversight.

Spiritual Needs: One essential way deacons serve others is through prayer. Deacons are eager to pray with others for their spiritual, physical, and practical well being and the building up of their faith. However, deacons are not biblical counselors nor do they serve to provide counseling. Counseling questions will be referred to the pastors or care group leaders of the members involved.

Administrative support: Deacons may assist in organizing the people and ministries of the

church to meet practical needs in our congregation and community.

Facilities: Deacons can be responsible for overseeing different aspects of our church property. This would include making sure the building is prepared for the Sunday service, periodic maintenance, and other practical needs associated with the upkeep and repairs of our building.

6. Conclusion - The Deacon's Reward

“For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” - 1 Timothy 3.13