

## WHAT IS A "DEACON" AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

### Qualifications & Responsibilities

#### Q1: What is a "deacon"

1. Definition of diakonos (διακονος). Servant, minister, deacon.
2. This word can be used **generically** for any servant (cf. Matt. 22:13; Jn. 2:5; etc).
3. This word can be used **technically** for a "deacon" as an officer of the church (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 10, 12, 13)

#### Q2: When are deacons needed?

Acts 6:1 – when the number of the disciples multiplies  
 Acts 6:1 – when people complain that their needs were not being met  
 Acts 6:2 – when the needs of the disciples cause the Leaders to neglect "the word of God"

#### Q3: Who qualifies to be a deacon according to Acts 6?

Acts 6:3 – they must be genuine "brethren"  
 Acts 6:3 – they must be selected out "from among" the true church  
 Acts 6:3 – they must be "men" (i.e. male as opposed to female)  
 Acts 6:3 – they must have a good "reputation" (this requires knowing them well)  
 Acts 6:3 – they must be "full of the Holy Spirit." Note: the filling of the Holy Spirit is evident in:

- 1) **Character** – bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25)
- 2) **Converts** – fervent evangelism and disciple making (Acts 1:8; chap 7; 8:4, 26). Deacons will be selected only from among those who have been actively participating in our Saturday morning evangelism and disciple-making (or a set time at another day of the week) for a period of at least three years.
- 3) **Conduct** – living under the Lordship of Christ, loving the brethren
- 4) **Coins** – deacons will be tithers and sacrificial givers (Matt. 6:21)
- 5) **Creed** – deacons will be in heart agreement with the **1689 Baptist Confession**

Acts 6:3 – they must be full of "wisdom."  
 Wisdom means, "knowing biblical principles for living righteously, and then living according to those principles." They cannot be a person who shuns wise counsel or repeatedly does stupid things.  
 Acts 6:3 – they must be appointed by the spiritual leaders (pastors)  
 Acts 6:3 – they must be willing and able to serve "over this business"

#### Q4: What are the qualifications listed in 1 Tim. 3:8-13?

- v. 8 – reverent. Not silly or flippant about important matters.
- v. 8 – not double-tongued. Honest, consistent speech.
- v. 8 – not given to much wine  
 Note – wine in the Jewish culture of the first century was not the strong, high alcohol content wine of the modern bar and liquor store. Wine in first century Judaism was used as a water purifier and healthy beverage and had no cultural baggage like it does today. To get "a buzz" or get drunk back then a man had to "tarry long at the wine" and had to be "given to much wine." In our culture, a couple of glasses will produce the same effect that hours of drinking would produce in the first century. In other words, modern "wine" is not the same drink as the "wine" of the first century righteous Jew. In light of these facts it is our position that our deacons will avoid beverage alcohol totally (Prov. 20:1; 23:20, 31; 23:29-35; 31:4; 1 Tim. 5:23).
- v. 8 – not greedy for money
- v. 9 – holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience (**The 1689** & Premill)

v. 10 – first tested.

Note: At Cornerstone this testing period normally takes four years – one year getting to know the brother while going through membership essentials, small group and Saturday evangelism, then three years discipleship by a leader or deacon.

v. 10 – being found blameless.

Note: This does not mean "sinless." Rather, "not able to be held" in a criminal sense. No valid accusation of wrongdoing can be made to stick. No overt, flagrant, repeated sin can mar a deacon's life. (For example, other issues would include: No gambling, not skipping church to watch the Super Bowl or play little league or Boy Scout camping, no social drinking, no "Ultimate Fighting," and such the like).

v. 11 – married to a godly woman.

v. 12 – married. "Let the deacons be the husband of one wife"

v. 12 – not having an adulterous heart ("of one wife")

v. 12 – good parenting skills ("ruling their children")

**Q5: What are the responsibilities of a deacon?**

To free up the pastors to focus on prayer and the word by doing whatever tasks the elders need to have done

To visit and see to needs of the sick, prisoners, elderly, fatherless, etc.

To see that guests and absentees are followed up with calls and visits

To oversee a guest assimilation program taking the guest "by the hand" and advancing guests from first visit to eventual small group attendance, evangelism involvement, and membership

To evangelize each week, primarily through the planned evangelism program of the church

To take one person through discipleship to maturity during the two years of service

To serve a two year term and rotate off for at least one year until reappointed by the elders

To take care of preparations for our big events, weddings, guest speakers (seating, food, etc.)

To oversee the benevolence needs of the church.

To oversee the needs of the physical property

To maintain loyalty to the pastor and this church in word and deed

To make recommendations for the elders to decide upon

To submit to the elders (Heb. 13:17)

To promote unity in the church and help resolve conflicts (Acts 6:1, 5)

To recruit volunteers to help them in fulfilling their responsibilities

**Q6: What are some responsibilities deacons do not have?**

They do not function as a ruling board

They do not meet regularly

They do not make decisions on the doctrine, direction, staff or ministry of the church

They are not administrators of the church

They do not select staff, deacons, teachers, small group leaders, etc.

**Q7: What am I as a member being asked to do now?**

Read this paper through and look up the Scriptures

Pray all week for God to guide you as you make nominations (no more than 7 names)

Make out an *initial list* of potential deacons

Consider each name as to the above qualifications – do they truly qualify to the best of your knowledge? Cross off any name which does not qualify.

Write *the final list* of 7 names on a 3x5 card and bring them to church on Sunday

The deacon is an extremely important ministry, and an historic step for our church. Please pray and fast for God to guide all of us.