



The Church: **Deacons**

I. Introduction

- We have just about completed work on all of our foundational documents and will be ready to present them to you. At that time we will have some kind of epic ceremony which will make all other ceremonies look puny to formalize membership for the founding members of Reformation Christian Fellowship. Because this time is drawing very near, we thought it was a good idea to run a brief refresher course on church roles. Steve discussed the definition, roles, and responsibilities of the membership and elders last week. This week, I will close the series by discussing deacons.
- Many of us will be prone to basing our understanding of what a deacon is on our personal experience. Maybe you have been a part of a church where deacons are the governing body of the church and thus you tend to think of deacons as the leaders of the church. Maybe you have been a part of a church where deacons change lightbulbs, take out the trash, and mow the church lawn and thus you tend to think of deacons as the maintenance team. Maybe you have been a part of a church where the deacons are good for nothing and thus you don't find them necessary at all. Today, I am asking you to try to put aside your experience and dig into to God's Word with me so that we can discover and submit to the bible's definition. In doing so, I believe it is very possible if not likely that your concept of what a deacon is and who can be a deacon will be seriously challenged.

II. What is a deacon?

- Our word deacon comes from the greek words *diakonos*, which means servant¹, and the greek word *diakoneo*, which means to serve. So if we want to know what a deacon is and should be, we must look at passages containing these words.

1. A deacon is not a leadership position.

- Not one of these passages describe deacons or deaconing as leading. All of these passages describe deacons and deaconing as serving. Any authority they have comes not from themselves, but from the one who has commissioned their service.
- We tend to identify deacons as a leadership position. It is more biblical to identify deacons as recognized and trusted servants. Someone who you know loves the Lord and someone who is capable of getting stuff done.

2. A deacon is not *just* a church position.

- We are all familiar with passages that speak of deacons that serve the church. However, the biblical use of the term deacon is much broader. The bible shows us that people can serve as deacons to a number of things...



God

- *Romans 13:3-4--For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good.*

¹ Mark Driscoll, *On Church Leadership (book you'll actually read)*, p.52.



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❖ 2 Corinthians 3:6--*Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us sufficient to be **ministers** of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit.*

❖ 2 Corinthians; 6:4--*but as **servants** of God we commend ourselves in every way:*

Jesus

❖ John 12:26--*If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my **servant** be also.*

❖ 2 Corinthians 11:22-23--*Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they **servants** of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.*

❖ Colossians 1:7--*just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful **minister** of Christ on your behalf*

Church

❖ Romans 16:1--*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **servant** of the church at Cenchreae,*

❖ Philippians 1:1--*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and **deacons**:*

❖ 1 Timothy 3:8-13--**Deacons** likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as **deacons** if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let **deacons** each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 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.

Human authorities

❖ Matthew 22:13--*Then the king said to the **attendants**, Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

❖ John 2:5--*His mother said to the **servants**, Do whatever he tells you.*

Satan

❖ 2 Corinthians 11:13-15--*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

Sin

❖ Galatians 2:17--*But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a **servant** of sin? Certainly not!*

3. **A deacon is one entrusted with and commissioned to accomplish a specific task.** (and the task could be just about anything)

❖ John 2:5--*His mother said to the **servants**, Do whatever he tells you.*

Bringing of the Gospel



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- ❖ Matthew 20:28--*even as the Son of Man came not to **be served** but to **serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 3:3--*And you show that you are a letter from Christ **delivered** by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

Spiritual comfort and strengthening

- ❖ Matthew 4:11--*Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were **ministering** to him.*
- ❖ Philemon 1:13--*I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,*

Edification

- ❖ 1 Peter 4:10--*As each has received a gift, use it to **serve** one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever **serves**, as one who **serves** by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Meeting of a financial needs

- ❖ Luke 8:3--*and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who **provided for them** out of their means.*
- ❖ Romans 15:25--*At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem **bringing aid** to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.*
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 8:19-20--*And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being **ministered** by us, We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being **administered** by us,*
- ❖ Hebrews 6:10--*For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in **servicing the saints**, as you still do.*

Serving tables

- ❖ Matthew 8:15--*He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to **serve** him.*
- ❖ Luke 10:40--*But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to **serve** alone? Tell her then to help me.*
- ❖ John 12:2--*So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha **served**, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.*
- ❖ Acts 6:2--*And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to **serve** tables.*

Meeting of a practical need

- ❖ Matthew 25:44--*Then they also will answer, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not **minister** to you?*

Delivery of a message

- ❖ Ephesians 6:21--*So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful **minister** in the Lord will tell you everything.*



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I. Who can be a deacon?

- If some one wants to deacon, or serve, on behalf of the church, there are qualifications. One may ask why? If a deacon is not a leadership position, why does it matter? It matters because those who serve on behalf of the church need to represent the church well. This is why Paul teaches...

❖ 1 Timothy 3:8-12--*Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 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.*

🕒 General qualifications for deacons (verses 8-10)²

- Dignified: worthy of respect, without any character defect, holy
- Not double-tongued: sincere, heartfelt, earnest, honest, authentic
- Not addicted to much wine: without addictions, self-controlled
- Not greedy for dishonest gain: not a lover of money, financially content and upright
- Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience: sound biblical theology held with deep conviction
- Tested: proven worthy over time

🕒 Special qualifications for women (verse 11)

- Right now, you might be thinking...WHAT!? WOMEN DEACONS!? Kenny has lost his mind! two things right now. If you are...consider the following things...
 - (1) A deacon is not a leadership or role. It is a serving role. Therefore, women serving as deacons is in no way a violation of 1 Timothy 2:12--*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man;*
 - (2) The bible has women deacons...
 - ❖ Romans 16:1--*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **servant** of the church at Cenchreae,*
 - (3) "Their wives" is a poor translation of this text. In the greek it simply reads "women likewise." This verse is speaking to women who would seek to serve as deaconesses. Otherwise, why would the wives of deacons (those who serve the church) be so specifically scrutinized while those who lead the church (elders) have no such scrutiny.
 - (4) You have been surrounded by women deacons all you life, they just weren't publically recognized as such. Anyone who has served as VBS director, Sunday School co-ordinator, secretary, hospitality co-ordinator, nursery co-ordinator, book keeper, young adult co-ordinator, or a host of other things has served in a way that the bible would describe as deaconing. We all know, and can name, women who have served in this way and there is certainly nothing wrong with it.

² Ibid, p.52.



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- Dignified: honored by both men and women as exemplary Christians, without any character defect
 - Not slanderers: not malicious talkers, not prone to sins of the tongue such as gossip, slander, lying, etc.
 - Sober-minded: temperate, not prone to emotionalism
 - Faithful in all things: trustworthy in everything, faithful in all life roles (e.g., wife, mother, daughter, sister)³
- 🕒 Special qualifications for men (verse 12)⁴
- Husband of one wife: a one-woman man, sexually pure,
 - Manages his children and household well: godly husband and father who leads, manages, and provides for his family.

II. The reward of deaconing

- ❖ 1 Timothy 3:13--*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.*
- This verse is Paul saying, "I know it sounds like a TON of work...it is. I know it sounds like in order to be a deacon your life must be super scrutinized...it must (*but not in a creepy way*). Nevertheless...it's totally worth it. Paul is pointing out two significant benefits for those who serve the church well...
 - (1) Those who serve well will be well respected
 - (2) Those who serve well will know Christ well.
 - Have you ever longed to know Christ's love deeper? Have you ever longed to know or experience Christ's power more vividly? Have you ever longed to understand the gospel of Christ and be moved by it more deeply? If so, serve His bride well.

³ Ibid, p.52.

⁴ Ibid, p.52.