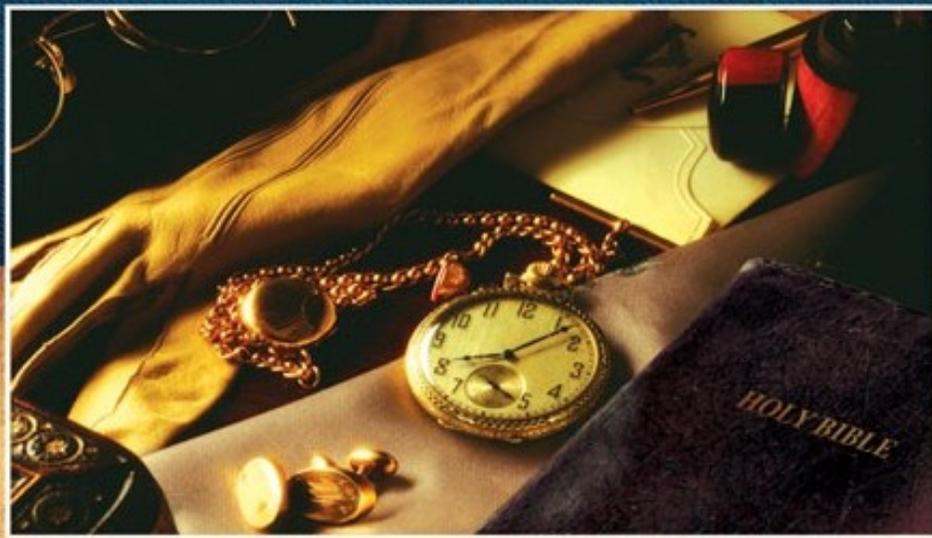


# THE DEACON I WANT TO BE



GROWING IN FAITH, FAITHFUL IN SERVICE

## **The Deacon I Want To Be**

*Growing In Faith, Faithful In Service*

*(An OVERVIEW by Tar River Baptist Association)*

February 25, 2012

**Become the DEACON God designed you to be!**

Either Dougald or Joe stand ready to come in and do this study with your church's deacons any way that we can assist. Suggestions to use this book include:

1. Rotate deacons to show DVDs (full 30 minute studies or 10 minute messages ) for 6 consecutive meetings and allow discussion.
2. Invite Dougald or Joe to come in and work with your deacons as a part of your regular deacons' meetings. Suggest adding 45-60 minutes to the meeting time.
3. Invite Dougald or Joe to come in and do a weekend retreat for the deacons (active and inactive—and consider “trainees”)
4. Do the study as deacons and then invite spouses into session three of the study. Invite Dougald or Joe to come in and facilitate that meeting;.

As stated, we stand ready to assist any way that we can!

# The Deacon I Want To Be

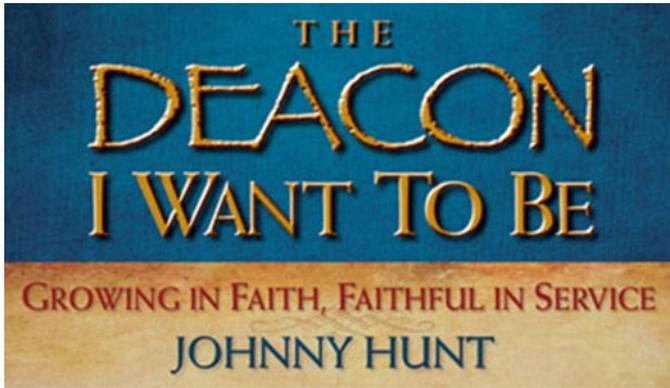
Welcome!! This is a good FIRST STEP. Our sessions today will be a solid introduction to some valuable helps in your service to the local church as a deacon. To “maximize” this tool, Tar River Baptist Association recommends that you—as a body of deacons within your church—determine to go through this material again with the manual prepared for the study. This means a 6-7 week (or longer) format. There is tremendous value in “meditating upon” the lessons taught in each session for a period of time. Though we will benefit from these principles in our time together today, we will not have the benefit of praying through and meditating upon them by quickly going through them today.

TRBA encourages you to set other times to offer this training to the deacons (and possibly prospects) in your local church. We will be happy to coordinate with you and perhaps would be able to come and lead the sessions, depending on the format chosen. You may choose a weekend deacons’ retreat, providing 45 minutes in regular deacons’ meetings; six-7 week study; or other format.

*It is strongly suggested that session three, The Deacon and His Wife, be used as a setting whereby BOTH husband and wife are together. Perhaps a dinner meal with the deacon board and wives, and then this session afterwards. This would fit “nicely” in the retreat weekend for deacons and wives. Tar River Baptist Association is looking strongly into covering this session at our annual Pastor, Deacon, and Spouse Dinner in September.*

## Our Schedule Today

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| ⇒ 8:30 — 9:00 AM | Registration (If all persons pre-registered are present, we will begin early) |
| ⇒ 9:00 — 9:15 AM | Overview Session  |
| ⇒ 9:15—10 :00 AM | The Deacon and his WORTHINESS   |
| ⇒ 10:00—10:45 AM | The Deacon and his WORK   |
| ⇒ 10:45—11:00 AM | Break   |
| ⇒ 11:00—11:15 AM | The Deacon and his WIFE   |
| ⇒ 11:15—12:00 PM | The Deacon and his WORSHIP  |
| ⇒ 12:00—12:45 PM | Lunch   |
| ⇒ 12:45— 2:00 PM | The Deacon and his WALK and Witness   |
| ⇒ 2:00— 2: 30 PM | Q & A (Wrap up)   |



## Session One: The Deacon And His WORTHINESS

### *His Qualifications, His Calling, and His Walk with Christ*

**Ephesians 4: 1—6:** “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with

*all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”*

### **Five Characteristics That Demonstrate How Deacons Walk “Worthy Of Their Calling”**

- \* By **KNOWING** that they have been called by God to serve as a deacon.
- \* By **BEING FAITHFUL** in their service as a deacon.
- \* By humbly viewing their service as a **PRIVILEGE** and not a right.
- \* By exercising **PATIENCE** as they serve.
- \* By exemplifying a **FORGIVING** spirit as they serve.

***MUCH emphasis is placed on the deacon’s character. Therefore, the church should select deacons only after examining their character, conduct, and commitment to the Lord!***

### **Scriptural Qualifications Of Those Serving As Deacons**

**1 Timothy 3: 8—13:** “Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

1. ***A Deacon must have a good reputation.*** 1 Timothy 3: 8
2. ***A Deacon must be a man of his word.*** 1 Timothy 3: 8
3. ***A Deacon must be without offense.*** 1 Timothy 3: 8

4. *A Deacon must be a generous giver.* 1 Timothy 3: 8
5. *A Deacon must have a good grip on God's Word.* 1 Timothy 3: 9
6. *A Deacon must be proven.* 1 Timothy 3: 10
7. *A Deacon must be blameless.* 1 Timothy 3: 10
8. *A Deacon must be a one-woman man.* 1 Timothy 3: 12
9. *A Deacon must be a good father.* 1 Timothy 3: 12
10. *A deacon must be the spiritual leader of his home.* 1 Timothy 3: 12

*A Statement worth considering — “If you can be a good Christian at home, you can be a good Christian anywhere.*

### **A Prayer Of Commitment As A Deacon**

Lord, I want to thank You for reminding me of how important it is for me to maintain godly character and conduct as a deacon in my church. I know there are areas where I need to make some changes in my life so that I can be the witness for You that I ought to be as a deacon. Lord, I commit to you that I will strive to do just that. I promise to take my role as a deacon seriously. I want to be all You want me to be. In Jesus' Name—Amen.

## Session Two: The Deacon And His WORK

### *His Mission, His Responsibilities, and His Mentoring*

**Acts 6: 1—4:** *“Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*”

#### **The WORK Of The Deacon**

- \* To **HANDLE** Church Growth: Deacons help the church handle the “growing pains” for the church.
- \* To **PROTECT** Church Harmony: Deacons have a great responsibility to help maintain church harmony.
- \* To **PROVIDE** For The Needs: Deacons have a responsibility to minister to the needs of the people in the church, working with the pastor and not expecting the pastor to “do it all.”
- \* To **PRIORITIZE** The Ministry: NOTHING should override the pastor’s responsibility to be devoted to prayer and preparation to proclaim the Word. “With deacons in place to serve tables, the apostles were set free to prioritize the ministry.”
- \* To **ENSURE** Gospel Penetration: BECAUSE the apostles were able to keep their priorities in order and the appointed men served the people, the church experienced great results.
  - ◇ The word of God **INCREASED**
  - ◇ The number of disciples **MULTIPLIED**
  - ◇ A great company of priests were **OBEDIENT** to the faith

***If we would truly HEAR what this passage is teaching, we could experience revival in the church of North America! When the church appoints men of character to serve as deacons; when deacons accept their responsibilities to humbly serve as deacons; when deacons and pastors prioritize the ministry; and when there is devotion to prayer and proclamation of the Word, THEN there will be growth! Do you HEAR—Faithful deacons serving the Lord by serving the people were LARGELY responsible for the new growth in the early New Testament Church!!!!***

### **A Prayer Of Commitment As A Deacon**

Heavenly Father, I come to you with a humble heart and a sincere desire to be a deacon that accomplishes the work assigned to me. Father, help me to always submit to myself to Your will. Let me submit myself to the leadership of my pastor, Your Undershepherd. Help me to submit to serving this dear church family You have called me to serve. As I serve, I am going to try my best to put You first in ALL things, others ahead of me, and myself last. In Jesus' Name I pray this prayer, Amen.

## Session Three: The Deacon And His WIFE

### *Her Attributes, Her Ministry, and Their Home Together*

*In today's session, we will NOT devote a great deal of time to discussion on this topic. It is greatly encouraged that this session be dealt with in a joint session with both husband and wife and allow God to use that time to build up the deacon ministry in the local church.*

**Proverbs 18: 22:** *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.”*

#### **Qualifications Of A Deacon's Wife**

Take Note: The Bible is NOT silent on the qualifications of a deacon's wife. It speaks clearly of her attributes, her ministry, and the home she shares with her husband. There are two overarching statements that can be made concerning the qualifications of a deacon's wife:

- \* She shares the SAME CALLING as her husband.
- \* She has the SAME CHARACTER as her husband.

Proverbs 31: 10—31 some specific things about the character, work, and ministry of a “good wife.” If we were to devote much time to this discussion, that is the passage of scripture we would look at during the session.

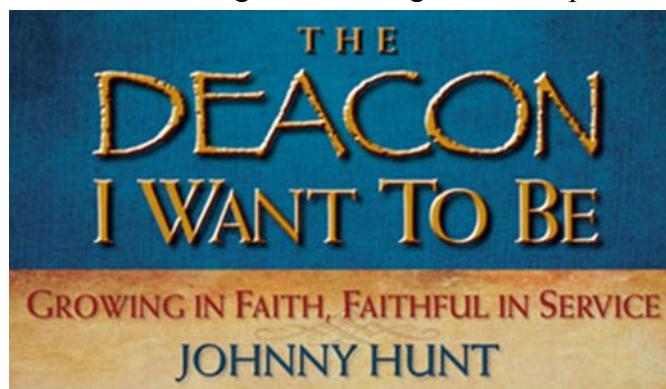
1 Timothy 3: 11 says, *“Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.”* Therefore, the special qualities of a deacon's wife is spelled out for us in scripture:

- ◇ Reverent: Serious about her calling and how she can help her husband fulfill the ministry of the deacon
- ◇ Responsible: Remember, deacon ministry grew out of division of the church and a deacon and his wife should NEVER contribute to division in the church!
- ◇ Reasonable: Should be “sober in judgment” and have self-control. In the manual it states, “not cheapening the ministry of the gospel message by foolish behavior.”
- ◇ Reliable: “Faithful in ALL things” is the terminology used.

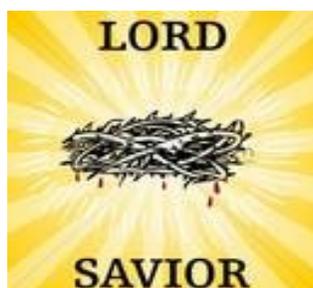
*The desire of a deacon's wife—just like her husband's desire—is to “grow in faith and be faithful in service.”*

#### **A Prayer Of Commitment As A Deacon**

Dear Lord, I want to begin by thanking You for my wife and revealing to us once again how important her role is as we seek to serve the church in this ministry. Help us to understand that our character and our conduct as a deacon and wife are to be exemplary and that You can use us to reach many people for Christ. Father, help me to serve her and our family well as I seek to serve You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



## Session Four: The Deacon And His WORSHIP



### *His Faithfulness to the Word, the Church, to Prayer and Praise*

**PRIVATE** and **CORPORATE** worship is essential for the deacon to be the deacon that God has commanded us to be in Him! If we are not faithful in worship, we cannot be all that we must be to serve the church and assist the church in its growth as a church. I have often stated that “from the wellspring of worship comes our ministry to the community.” **FAITHFULNESS** is essential to our vitality as believer. The next two sessions also are dependent on our worship of the Living Lord. If we are not engaged/faithful in worship, then we cannot become faithful in our walk and witness. In effect, we cannot be the witnesses God has commanded us to be in Acts 1:8 because we are striving to be what He has commanded us to be in our own strength and NOT in His power.

The final three sessions of this study really encompass the essence of this study—*we ARE to be GROWING in our faith. We ARE to be FAITHFUL in our service!* Truthfully, if we ARE growing in our faith, then we are NATURALLY becoming more faithful in our service BECAUSE God is transforming our nature to be more like Him. In a recent Wednesday night prayer meeting a deacon prayed, “Lord, help us to find joy in those things that bring you pleasure.” **What an appropriate prayer!**

**John 4: 23—24:** “*But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*”

**Revelation 3: 20:** “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*”

**Mark 1: 35:** “*In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.*”

Johnny Hunt states, “*As much as I love to preach and teach the Word of God each week in our church and around the country, I can assure you that without a REGULAR schedule of public AND PRIVATE worship of the Lord Jesus Christ I would be totally ineffective as a pastor and a preacher of the Gospel. I simply have to worship. I cannot live and function without it.*”

From Johnny’s statements above, reflect upon the following:

- ◇ How faithful are you to corporate worship with your church family?
- ◇ How faithful are you in your family worship, teaching your family the truths of God?
- ◇ How faithful are you in finding that secluded place for private worship?
- ◇ How effective can you be in ministry without these times of worship?
- ◇ Can you “live and function without it?”

## What is Worship?

The manual with this study states that the word worship “is a compound word that means give worth.” I have heard it described as being “worth—ship,” so that fits. When we WORSHIP God (and believe me, we worship something), we are acknowledging that He is worthy of our worship.

As I pen the above words I question my statement—”He is worthy of our worship.” I know it is true that God demands my worship; that He deserves my worship; and that He desires my worship of Him. However, I believe God is worthy of far more than I often give Him in MY worship (meditate upon that—do you give Him what he “deserves” or what you “feel like?”

The scriptures listed above indicate that God is standing at the door, knocking and inviting Himself into our lives if we will open the door of our hearts and allow Him to come into our lives. As spiritual leaders, deacons have the need to worship God in spirit and in truth. Your manual states, ***“two aspects of worship must exist for as deacon to be faithful to the Word, to the church, and to prayer and praise.”*** Let’s look briefly to those two aspects:

### A Deacon and His PRIVATE Worship



Let’s begin by simply asking the correct questions:

1. How much time alone do you spend with God?
2. Is your private time alone with the Lord DAILY a top priority?
3. If you are not having regular communion with God, how can you fulfill your responsibilities as a deacon?
4. What can you determine to do TODAY that will help you develop the “habit” of spending time alone with God daily?

Your manual states, *“The times of our corporate worship are only as good as the accumulation of the individual times of our private worship. It is one thing to come to worship on Sunday, and it is quite another to bring our worship with us.”* The manual goes further to suggest several things must be a part of our private worship and happen as a result of our private worship.

- ◇ My conversation with God should include honest confession, gratitude, and intercession for others
- ◇ My communion with God must include my looking into His Word and allowing His Word to teach me His ways (I must be open to his encouragement and correction)
- ◇ God responds to my private worship in personal ways that lifts my heart.
- ◇ Genuine private worship leads to personal purity.
- ◇ My purity (personal holiness) in Christ empowers public service.

***“To be the deacon you want to be, you must realize that NOTHING ranks higher than personal purity. If you miss in the area of personal purity, EVERYTHING ELSE falls by the wayside.”***

## A Deacon and His PUBLIC Worship

Faithfulness to the public worship of the church is a necessity! It simply “makes sense” to expect that a deacon should be actively involved (committed) in the events of his church. Worship is not just at the 11 AM morning worship service. When there is a gathering of praise and thanksgiving, Bible study, a call to prayer, fellowship as a church body—a deacon should be faithful in worship!

In the scripture the only church officers mentioned are pastors and deacons (sometimes referred to as elders for both positions). You should take note—the qualifications are basically the same. That means their responsibilities “mirror” one another. Deacons are equally responsible for promoting and attending church serves as are the pastor and ministerial staff of the church. Your manual states, ***“Since no group ever rises above its leadership, pastors and deacons should set the example for faithful attendance. In so doing, they will be raising the standard for the rest of the church family to follow their example.”***

Included in our faithful public worship is the giving of our tithes and offerings. I challenge you to examine both your practice of giving and your attitude about giving. Johnny Hunt declares in this study that no man should be considered for ordination as a deacon if he does not contribute financial support to his own church. We can “argue” that point if we like—and we probably do if we do not tithe or hold wrong motives about the giving of tithes/offerings—but we cannot ignore the scripture mandate to be good stewards; to give tithes and offerings above the tithe, etc. Even Jesus’ statement in Matthew 6: 21 lends credibility to the necessity of supporting the church financially—*“For where your treasure is, there will your heart also be.”* In short, the faithfulness of our giving to support the church we serve is a clear indicator of our true attitude toward the church. ***“How can a deacon serve a church when his heart is not in it?”***

Your manual relates that it will be very difficult for a pastor to lead his church to give financially when his deacons are not setting the example. Let me draw a little from personal experience in working in smaller membership churches. I served churches and never had fewer than 7 deacons (one with 12). Most of the time, the deacons were of the higher economic status in the church. Many of their wives worked or were retired from public jobs. In almost every instance, 80% of the church’s budget could be met IF the pastor, church staff, deacons and their spouses tithed. Is that a budget of faith? When the budget needs are not being met, don’t the people automatically KNOW the deacons are not giving sacrificially to what they are asking church members to support?

### A Deacon Should Be Faithful In Support Of His Pastor

The partnership of pastor and deacons is on public display every time the church gathers. When the church scatters, the partnership of pastor and deacons should be evident in conversation and practice!

- ◇ Consider gathering with the pastor to pray with him prior to the service
- ◇ Consider praying for the pastor during the service
- ◇ During the invitation, stand ready to assist those who respond
- ◇ When people come with a “complaint” against the pastor, go with them to the pastor





so it can be resolved and not allow it to become a divisive element in the church

◇ Fervently pray for God's Undershepherd daily and give words of encouragement often

## ***“Worship is the key to being an effective deacon”***

### **A Prayer Of Commitment As A Deacon**

Dear God, I realize that You want true worshippers and I want to be one. I understand that to be an effective deacon, I must be engaged in genuine worship. I understand more and more that to be the deacon I really want to be, I must submit to You daily. I know that I cannot serve You well if I am not worshipping You with all of my heart. I pray that You will help me to experience You each day. I pray that You will help me find times to have times of private worship. Help me not to surrender to the enemy and fill my time with those things that take away from my time with You. Help me to better understand how import it is that I am faithful to Your church in attendance of events that demonstrate to the people I am called to serve that You are worthy of my worship and praise. Help me to Honor You daily with my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

# Become the DEACON God designed you to be!

## Session Five: The Deacon And His WALK

### *His Application of Kingdom Principles for Daily Living*

If our worship is genuine, then our daily walk and personal witness for the Living Lord Jesus Christ will reflect it daily! “From the wellspring of genuine worship, comes our ministry/service.”

When we are referring to a “deacon’s walk,” we are referring to two critical areas of his life. First, his conduct (behavior, demeanor, way he controls himself, etc.) and second, his conversation. We will look deeper into each in this study. An excellent example is Stephen, one of the original 7 chosen to serve in Acts 6. Stephen was “serious about God’s business,” as we should be in obedience to our calling of God upon our lives today!

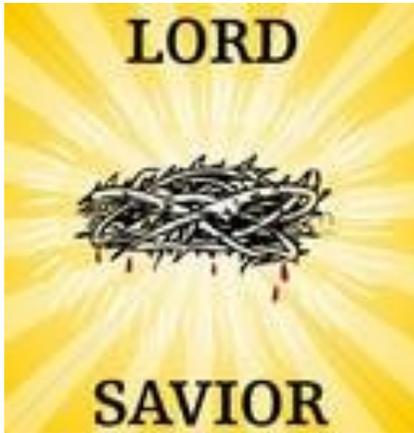
**Acts 6: 3, 7 :** *“Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.....The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”*

**Acts 7: 54—60:** *“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.”*

**Colossians 3: 1—4:** *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*

Stephen certainly met the qualifications for a deacon! It cost him his life! Perhaps we should meditate upon that for a few minutes!! It took a godly walk to respond like Stephen did!! His exemplary life personified our biblical model of a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.





**WHEN Jesus  
IS LORD.....  
Your walk is  
FAR DIFFERENT!!!!!!**

### Stephen's Godly Walk

**Stephen's Walk of Fullness:** The church in Acts 6 was looking for men that had been "time-tested and proven." Stephen met all 6 qualifications:

1. **Men known to be honorable:** A deacon's conduct and character ought to stand out in such a way that people both inside and outside the church count him as being an honorable man.
2. **Men willing to serve with others on a team:** The church chose seven men to serve on a team. Men on a team must be able to serve together, listen to the opinions of others, put the well-being of others first, etc. "Deacons who focus on the will of God and the good of the church do not insist on getting their way when decisions need to be made."
3. **Men who were of "good reputation:"** Deacons often handle the church's ministry resources and distribute them to others, therefore they must be men with an impeccable reputation.
4. **Men filled with the Spirit of God:** Again, we emphasize the quality time alone with God (private worship) in the life of a deacon. A deacon should allow God to mold his character and seeks to be led by the Spirit.
5. **Men who were wise and competent:** A deacon with "wisdom" serves the church in a skillful, deliberate, and organized way. The manual writes, "In Stephen's day, a lack of skill would have only added to the murmuring of disgruntled church members." Perhaps that is worthy of a time of reflection.
6. **Men who were responsible and diligent:** "Being a deacon is NOT about status; it is about service. It is NOT a position to hold, it is a work to do." *Selah!*

**Stephen's Walk of Faithfulness:** Twice the scripture recorded that "Stephen was full of faith." Faithful to the Gospel, faithful to his testimony, and faithful to the truth of scripture.

1. **He was faithful with God's ministry:** When God gives us a ministry to do, He expects us to do it.
2. **He was faithful with the Gospel message:** Stephen KNEW the Scriptures and was a great defender of the faith.
3. **He was faithful with good motives:** Stephen's very countenance glowed from the inside out. Our inner life cannot remain hidden — Stephen's life was pure and undefiled as he served the church that had ordained him to the ministry.

**Stephen's Walk of Forgiveness:** This is perhaps the truest mark of Stephen's Christlikeness—forgiving those that treated him wrong. Stephen indeed practiced Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 43—46: “love your enemy and pray for those that persecute you). He practiced the principle of overcoming evil with good (Romans 12: 17—21: NEVER pay back evil for evil/ overcome evil with good).

Stephen's ability to forgive others afforded him a “standing ovation” from heaven—”But he...saw the glory of God, and Jesus STANDING on the right hand of God (Acts 7: 55).”

***Do you want the applause of man, or a standing ovation of Christ as you enter into the eternal presence of God?***

### **A Prayer Of Commitment As A Deacon**

Heavenly Father, thank you for the example of Stephen. Help me to be more like him. I pray that I would be full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom just like he was. Help me Father to apply your teachings so that those things that were evident in Stephen's life that were honorable to You, will become more and more a part of my life as Your servant. Father, I have thought that there is a level of deacon that I want to be, but I now ask You to help me to become the deacon that You want me to be, for it is then that I can please and honor You. Thank you Lord for Your faithfulness, grace, and mercy towards me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen

**Become the DEACON God designed you to be!**



## Session Six: The Deacon And His WITNESS

### *Sharing Christ Faithfully and Helping the Church to Grow*

Again, the deacons worship, walk, and witness is linked closely! Your manual makes a statement that is worthy of consideration, “...*churches that enthusiastically embrace the biblical model for the office of deacon agree that there is no substitute model to be found anywhere. This model works!*”

**I Timothy 3: 8-9:** “*Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.*”

God calls deacons to serve as FAITHFUL witnesses for Jesus Christ. Philip serves as a biblical model of one of the “seven men” chosen in Acts 6 that was faithful in his witness for the Lord. He served the church well as a deacon, but he also became known as a “soul winner,” an evangelist. EVERY TIME the Bible mentions Philip, he is sharing the Gospel. He was willing to share with people that were considered “different,” and perhaps not worthy by some of the people around him. He went to Samaria (Acts 8: 5). He shared with the Ethiopian (Acts 8: 26-40). He preached the Gospel to women (Acts 8: 12). Gender—”worthiness”—race—color of skin—distance of travel—**culturally accepted or not, Philip proclaimed Jesus.**

“**Deacons should see themselves as missionaries....**” God has **strategically** placed us as His servants in places where we can influence the people around us with His message. **We need to embrace the idea that we are to daily share the Gospel.**

**Why are deacons sometimes UNFAITHFUL in their personal witness for the Lord?**

- ◇ Apathy
- ◇ Lack of example
- ◇ Feel untrained or inadequate
- ◇ Fear
- ◇ Too busy——>
- ◇ Ignorance of scripture and how to share it effectively

## Lessons From Philip The Soul-winner

1. **Philip was a pioneer in sharing the Gospel:** The first to take the Gospel to non-Jewish territory. He took the Great Commandment and the Great Commission SERIOUSLY.
2. **Philip shared the Gospel in difficult places:** Samaria—the Ethiopian—women — all “against the grain” for his culture. Sometimes our place of service will be difficult, BUT we must remain faithful! A deacon must have a vision big enough to encompass all people and a willingness to go to all people and share Christ.
3. **Philip did not hesitate to obey the Lord:** In Acts 8: 26—30, Philip was traveling southwest. The Ethiopian was traveling northeast. BUT—Philip RAN to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, demonstrating simple and immediate obedience to God WITHOUT DELAY OR RESERVATION.
4. **Philip used the Scripture to witness for Jesus:** The eunuch had the scriptures with him and lacked understanding. Philip EXPLAINED them to him (he did not have to run to get an Apostle). Simple truth—God uses deacons to proclaim His truth and grow His church!

### A Prayer Of Commitment As A Deacon

Father, please help me to do the work of an evangelist. Teach me Your ways. Your Word. Help me to understand so that I can share with others. Help me to take advantage of every opportunity to share the Gospel—whether that opportunity comes in my neighborhood, or way outside my comfort zone, please help me to see and seize the opportunity to share Christ Jesus and His hope with people all around me that are in despair, Lord, I surrender my will to Your will and ask that You help me today to live for You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**Become the DEACON God designed you to be!**

**On the pages to follow are some articles that you might find helpful in the ministry God has called you to do as a deacon.**

# Five Ways to Know You Are Structured for Growth

February 20, 2012

By [Rick Warren](#)

In order to keep growing, you have to have a biblical statement, a biblical strategy, and a biblical structure. Every building has a structure. Without the right structure, the building will fall over. With the right structure, the building will stand a long time. Unfortunately, most churches are structured around events or programs instead of processes. Programs and events eventually die out; processes go on and on and on.

At Saddleback, we bring people into membership, build them up to maturity, train them for their ministry, and send them out on their mission. That's a process we've been doing for 32 years. Every year, we don't have to wonder, "What are we going to do next year?" Programs and events change, but the systemic, sequential development of discipleship just keeps on going.

A lot of churches will have a process for one or two years, and then they'll stop. To be a purpose driven church, you have to keep doing the same thing Jesus taught us to do over and over again, and you have to have a structure for it. **All living organisms have a structure.** Did you know that no animal grows above seven inches without a skeleton? Without the proper skeleton, your church will not grow beyond its current rate. As the growth changes, the structure has to change to let the growth happen. Until you get a bigger pot for a root-bound plant, it's not going to grow anymore.

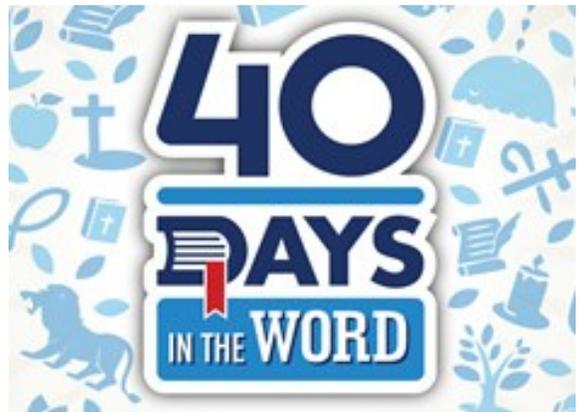
**In order to keep growing, you have to have a biblical statement, a biblical strategy, and a biblical structure.** Luke 5:37 says that you can't put "new wine into old wineskins." If you have new wine or new growth, you have to have a new structure. If you're going to have growth during 40 Days in the Word, you're going to have to be structured for it, or you're going to lose it all.

Structure is also what usually keeps churches from growing past 200 people. The kind of structure we had at Saddleback when we had 15 people was not the structure we used when we had 50 people. The kind of structure we had when we had 50 people didn't work when we had 95. And, even, what worked at 20,000 didn't work at 22,000. We are constantly changing structure. Peter Drucker once told me that an organization needs to change its structure every time it grows 45 to 47 percent. During the first 10 years of Saddleback, we actually grew 47 or 48 percent every year, which meant that every year we were revising how we made decisions, how we structured our team, and how we did small groups.

**How do you know you're structure isn't working?** There are three telltale signs:

- **Plateaued growth.** Structure does not cause growth, but it does limit it. It controls the rate and the size of growth. Changing your structure will not cause you to grow; it will allow you to grow.
- **Internal conflict.** It is a sign that you have outgrown your structure.

**Discouraged leadership.** When people get discouraged, it often means the structure is not allowing them to be creative.



The number one hurt I've discovered among pastors is the conflict that comes from inadequate structure. They get tired of fighting the bureaucracy. It drains their enthusiasm, and it kills their vision. This is very dangerous territory — you don't just go out and change your structure. You have to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. Minor changes are major victories.

**There are five levels of church renewal and change:**

1. **Personal Renewal.** When God wants to work in a church, it always starts with the heart, and it always starts with the leader. 40 Days in the Word is about personal renewal. It's when Jesus becomes real to you again and you fall in love with him all over again.
2. **Relational Renewal.** First you get right with God, and then you get right with each other. There are two ways you know a church has had relational renewal: The singing gets better because people like each other better and they are genuinely worshipping. Also, people stay longer after the service because they just want to hang out and talk with each other.
3. **Missional Renewal.** Many times a church will grow after the first two renewals, and then growth hits a plateau because they never reach missional renewal. This is when you discover the purpose for your life and your church family. Once you reach this point, you cannot keep a church from growing.
4. **Structural Renewal.** As the church continues to grow, it will realize that it cannot put new wine in old wineskins.

**Cultural Renewal.** When the first four renewals line up, the church starts impacting its community, and this is cultural renewal. I think we would all agree that America needs cultural renewal. You know that the sun is setting on a culture when small men cast long shadows. But cultural renewal will not happen without personal, relational, missional, and structural renewal.

## Be a More Balanced Church

Remember the old V-8 commercials where someone who wasn't taking in a balanced diet would be leaning to one side? That's what I think of as I read the thoughts and opinions of various church leaders about "what the church should be all about."

It typically sounds something like one of the following...

Jesus was a disciple-making discipler who disciplined disciples, so the church should be *all about* making disciple-making discipling disciples as well. Let's disciple some more disciples.

Soul-winning is the main thing! And we need to keep the main thing the main thing, and that's soulwinning. Let's win more souls! How many have you baptized this week?

The church needs the Word. We should be taking people deep into the Word through a historical grammatical hermeneutic and expository preaching. Let's start another in-depth expository Bible study.

It's all about the worship, man. Let's feel the music, experience the excellence, and sing all night.

You get the picture. We tend to go to seed on our favorite issues, and sometimes unwise leaders pursue their own passions to the neglect of other areas of concern for the local church. This is the reason I still think one of the greatest books on church leadership ever written is Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*, and I long to see an up and coming generation read it afresh for insights into the issue of balanced church health.

The fact is, God has expressed five distinct purposes for His people and for every local church.

1. God wants every church to grow larger through evangelism.
2. God wants every church to grow deeper through discipleship.
3. God wants every church to grow warmer through fellowship.
4. God wants every church to grow broader through ministry.
5. God wants every church to grow stronger through worship.

I've seen these packaged a little differently by different leaders and different churches. The mission statements vary, the terminology changes, but I love to see a balanced church moving forward in God's purposes. **Avoid going to seed on one issue and be all that God meant for you to be.**

## The Biblical Role of Deacons

**New Testament Deacons serve the Lord by conducting the caring ministry of the church—doing the benevolence work, visiting the sick, being alert to the spiritual needs of the congregation—for the purposes of freeing the pastoral staff to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word, promoting unity within the church, and facilitating the spread of the gospel.**

### **Biblical Guidance on the Office of Deacon**

**Deacons and Elders Are the Two Distinct Offices in a New Testament Church** The two New Testament offices are mentioned together in Philippians 1:1 and in 1st Timothy 3 — bishops and deacons. In 1st Timothy 3 the qualifications are spelled out for the two offices, bishops in verses 1-7, and deacons in verse 8-13. The qualifications are similar, but not identical. For example, the bishop is required to be “able to teach” whereas the deacon does not have that expectation. The differences in title and qualifications mean that the offices are distinct.

The term “bishop” is translated overseer in some translations. It is the word from which we get our word “episcopal” which means, “to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for” and refers to “the care of the church which rested upon the elders.” The term is used interchangeably with “elder” and “shepherd” (i.e. pastor) in Acts 20 and 1st Peter 5. There is no question about the authority of the office: “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine” (1st Timothy 5:17 NKJV)

Three facts stand out:

Deacons and Elders are the offices in the church. The offices are distinct. Elders are not deacons. Deacons are not elders.

The terms, Elder, Pastor (shepherd), and Overseer (bishop) are used synonymously in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, elders had the role of the general oversight of the church.

**In the original language, the word, *Deacon*, means *Servant*:** The title itself, is as descriptive as any job description could be. In the Bible, words have meanings and the word "deacon" means servant. Here is how the word has been defined in its various forms:

**"Diakoneo** and its derivatives, as their etymology suggests, are used mainly for personal help to others."

**Diakonia** is found 34 times in the NT. It means service at the table in Lk. 10:40; Acts 6:1, etc."

**Diakanos** is found 29 times in the NT. Its primary meaning is one who serves at tables."

"In Philippians 1:1 and in numerous references in early Christian literature outside the New Testament, bishops and/or elders and deacons are mentioned together, with deacons mentioned last. Because of this order, and because of the natural connotations of the word diakonos, most interpreters believe that deacons, from the beginning, served as assistants of church leaders."

## **The Office of Deacon Was Created for the Purpose of Handling the Benevolence Ministry**

The Biblical account is quite clear on the founding of the deaconship and nowhere does Scripture repeal the original purpose:

“NOW ABOUT this time, when the number of the disciples was greatly increasing, complaint was made by the Hellenists (the Greek-speaking Jews) against the [native] Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked and neglected in the daily ministrations (distribution of relief). So the Twelve [apostles] convened the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not seemly or desirable or right that we should have to give up or neglect [preaching] the Word of God in order to attend to serving at tables and superintending the distribution of food. Therefore select out from among yourselves, brethren, seven men of good and attested character and repute, full of the [Holy] Spirit and wisdom, whom we may assign to look after this business and duty.’” Acts 6:1-3 (Amplified)

## **The Office of Deacon Was Established to Free the Apostles (who functioned as the first pastors) to Pray and to Prepare to Minister the Word**

The Apostles, in dealing with the benevolence ministry problem at the Jerusalem church, told the congregation that, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Acts 6:2-4 (NKJV)

Some have understood this passage to mean that it is the role of deacons to oversee the business of the church. First, the text says, “this business,” not “the business” — and the business being referred to is the business of benevolence. Second, as Dr. Robert Naylor points out, that would be a misrepresentation of the meaning of the word:

“The word ‘business’ should be discussed a little to prevent any misunderstanding. The Greek word is *chreia* and basically means ‘need.’ It is so translated twenty-five times. This is the only place it is translated ‘business.’ Hence there is no Scriptural authority for the deacons to make financial decisions of the church. Church decisions must remain church decisions.”

## **The Early Deacons Were Selected for Their Spiritual Qualifications**

1st Timothy 3 and Acts 6 expound the qualifications for the office of deacons; the later contains what could fairly be called the "core qualifications":

"Men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" -- Acts 6:3

"And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" -- Acts 6:5

Often, when someone is discussed as a possible deacon one hears a remark such as, "He attends regularly and is a good giver." But God is looking at men with an internal dynamic, which cannot be determined in a superficial way.

## **Deacons Are to Be Capable of Serving the Lord in Spiritual Ways**

The original seven deacons were people who were able to serve the Lord in ways which were more spiritual in nature than merely delivering food. Stephen was a man of spiritual power: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8 NJKV). Philip was not only a deacon, but also was gifted in evangelism (Acts 8:5-7).

## **The Office of Deacon Requires a Firm Grasp of Sound Doctrine**

A church is content oriented. It is a doctrinally driven community, built upon truth. Every member should have this approach in this fellowship; leaders such as deacons, not less but, more so. "They must possess the mystic secret of the faith [Christian truth as hidden from ungodly men] with a clear conscience" Acts 6:9 (Amplified)

## **The Presence of Deacons Should Advance the Unity of a Church**

When the Apostles laid out the plan for the creation of this office, "The saying pleased the whole multitude" (Acts 6:5 NKJV). The complaints about the benevolence ministry stopped. And the complaints were by the Greek speaking Jews, the Hebrew speaking Jews obviously bent over backwards to preserve the church's unity, for all the men selected had Greek names. It is still true today: Any time a church has deacons who are properly doing their jobs, the church is more likely to be at unity.

## **The Presence of Deacons Should Advance the Cause of Evangelism**

The immediate impact of the creation of the office of deacon was to eliminate the controversy in the church and to get the church back on course in fulfilling its mission. The Bible says that, "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:8 NKJV). Again, it is still true. When a church has deacons who are in God's will, the cause of world evangelization will be aided.

## **The Biblical Pattern for Deacons Seen in Church History**

**In the second through fifth centuries**, deacons were the real agents of the charity provided through the church, providing for widows and orphans. They visited the sick and, as early as the third century, had deacon family ministry plans. They visited the martyrs in prison. Deacons helped to train new converts. They kept watch over the church members, reporting to the bishop any who seemed about to fall away. They attempted to restore the excommunicated. Deacons carried out administrative assignments given them by their bishops and met daily to receive instructions from him. Failure to carry out their assignments was cause for removal. If they had the authority from a bishop and a presbyter or bishop were present, they could baptize. They also assisted with the Lord's Supper.

During the **Middle Ages** the Office of Deacon came to less resemble the New Testament Model. "Later, medieval deacons assumed an increasingly ecclesiastical role, and their tendency to become candidates for the priesthood became more pronounced than ever. Almost no one was ordained to the diaconate unless he intended to advance to the priesthood."

## **During the Reformation the Return to Scripture Resulted in a Return to the Biblical Role of Deacons**

Martin Luther: "The diaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of distributing the church's aid to the poor"

John Calvin: "Scripture specifically designates as deacons those whom the church has appointed to distribute alms and take care of the poor, and serve as stewards of the common chest for the poor."

Again, Calvin: "Here, then, is the kind of deacons the apostolic church had, and which we, after their example should have."

Timothy George summarizes Calvin's view of the biblical role of deacons: "Calvin did in fact hold the office of deacon in high esteem. Deacons were public officers in the church entrusted with the care of the poor. He urged that they be skilled in the Christian faith since, in the course of their ministry, 'they will often have to give advice and comfort.' Indeed, the deacons in Calvin's Geneva should have experts in what we call today social work as well as pastoral care."

In the early 1600's **early Baptists** such as John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, saw the primary role of deacons as that of carrying out the benevolence ministry of the church.

In 1654, in what would become an often repeated description, Thomas Collier pictured the work of deacons as that of serving tables: **the table of the Lord, the table of the minister, and the table of the poor** Later Southern Baptist leaders would later utilize this description to describe the work of the deacon. Southwestern Seminary founding president B.H. Carroll recalled hearing a sermon delivered by S. S. Lattimore with this very outline and stated that he "thought it a very ingenious division of the table question" As recently as 1997, former SBC president Jim Henry used this outline as part of his materials in *Deacons: Partners in Ministry and Growth*.

## **The Drift Among Baptists From the Biblical Model**

"In the later half of the eighteenth century, a new concept of Baptist deacons emerged and continues to exist in many churches today. This was the view of deacons as church business managers. This view stressed to a seemingly excessive degree the administrative function of deacons and tended to distract from other areas of service previously given equally strong attention"

The drift started as an effort to "Relieve the minister from the secular concerns of the church" But by 1846, R. B. C. Howell was using new terminology, saying that deacons are, "A board of directors, and have charge of the all the secular affairs in the kingdom of Christ" "...The deacons in their own peculiar department are, as we have said, a BOARD OF OFFICERS, or the executive board of the church, for her temporal department..." This is when and how in Baptist life deacons came to be called a *board*. **This term has no biblical rooting in word or concept.**

Howell regarded the spiritual ministry of the pastor and the temporal ministry of the deacon as separate areas, or *departments*: "...The pastor has supervision of all the spiritualities of the church, and is therefore bishop or overseer in that department; so the deacons are overseers of all her temporalities, of which they have full control" page 12). He stated, however, that, "It is not, lastly, the duty of deacons to rule in the church" (page 66), explaining that, "Deacons are not ruling elders" (page 69).

There were those, at the time, who saw this trend as a cause of concern. In 1852, one New York pastor/historian warned against the concept of the deacon as being a person, "Of so much importance and ec-

clesiastical consequence in the Church, that all the membership, and all the affairs in the Church, and the Pastor, must be dictated, and ruled and governed by him." In 1897, Edwin C. Dargan, professor of homiletics and ecclesiology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, warned of the tendency of deacons to act as "a sort of ruling presbytery"

### **How to Know if Your Church is Off Track**

Howard Foshee listed **three evidences that deacons are operating under the concept of a board:**

When all major recommendations from church operations and church committees are screened by the deacons whether they should go to the congregation.

When the pastor and staff members are directly responsible to the deacons rather than to the church.

When the use or expenditure of major church resources, such as facilities and finances, must first be approved by the deacons.

### **How Baptists Began to Return to the Biblical Concept of Deaconship**

Beginning subtly in the 1950's and intensifying in the 1970's there were repeated rejections of the concept of deaconship which began in the 1800's. Robert E. Naylor, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, warned in 1955 that:

"There are churches where deacons have appropriated to themselves authority which is contrary to New Testament teaching. It may have gone so far that bossism has developed. There is a 'board' complex and a general feeling that deacons are 'directors' of the church. Nothing could be farther from the Baptist genius or the New Testament plan. Anywhere this condition exists, there inevitably are those who say that deacons are not needed. The truth is that such deacons as this... are not needed in churches"

In the 1970's, Howard Foshee was firmly rejecting the terminology of the period; he recounted,

"The unfortunate term, 'board of deacons' arose. The phrase is foreign to the way Baptists should work together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. A Baptist congregation makes corporate decisions as each member seeks to vote his conviction under the leadership of the Lord."

Describing the role of the original seven deacons, Wayne Dehoney wrote, "The first responsibility of these men was to assist the pastors in the spiritual ministry of shepherding and caring for the flock and to free the pastors for the ministry of prayer, preaching, and training. ***Actually, these seven were selected to be 'under-shepherds' of the flock.***"

In Foshee's chapter, *Understand Your Work as Deacon*, his subtitles include, *Deacon Work Originated to Meet Spiritual Needs* and *Deacons Should Organize for Ministry*. It was during this period that various "Deacon Family Ministry" materials were made available by the Sunday School Board and became popular. By the 1990's, it was a decided issue in denominational publications and among Baptist leaders. In 1991 Jerry Songer wrote that, "The board of deacons and business manager concept is no longer a viable model"

In 1997, Jim Henry was returning Baptists to Thomas Collier's portrait of the work of deacons as that

of serving three tables (the table of the Lord, the table of the minister, and the table of the poor) as part of his video training materials

### **Why the "Board of Directors" Concept Persists**

There are several reasons why the "Board of Directors" model persists in Baptist life:

As a carry-over from rural churches and the days when they had bi-vocational, perhaps half or quarter time "preachers," who were not on the field to tend to day to day ministry and administration.

Because of the conclusion that it is common sense to hash things out behind closed doors before bringing them out to the floor for a church vote; who else is there, besides the deacons, to hash things out?

Because some Christians have the gift of administration (or skills in that area) and the deacon body is the only place in their church's organizational structure where there is opportunity to serve the Lord in that way.

In order to provide reasonable accountability. Without such a body, an individual may become tempted to abuse his trust.

From the experience of deacons with a background in the business world (which would include R.B.C. Howell) or secular charitable institutions. Sometimes, it was the only model with which they have had any real familiarity.

Because some deacons would be out of their comfort zones - perhaps they don't know enough Bible to understand the New Testament teaching on the office of deacon or they don't feel comfortable in doing ministry. So they stick to that with that with which they are comfortable.

### **Approaches in Returning to the Biblical Deaconship**

Various approaches are being taken by churches attempting to return to a more biblical model of deaconship. How far they are willing to go in the effort is determined by a number of variables including their view of and emphasis on Scripture, their understanding of the nature of the church, the age of the congregation, and the unanimity of the fellowship on whether steps need to be taken at all.

**Changing the Terminology** Some churches, in an effort to improve their church's concept of deaconship, have attempted to return to Biblical terminology and drop the language of the business world. Perhaps, they no longer refer to the deacons as a "board," but as a "body," maybe removing the term "chairman of the board."

**Changing the Attitude** These churches simply decide that a change of by-laws would be unwise or unpassable, but that for them a move toward a more servant-ministry approach and mentality would be in order.

**Moving to a Form of Church Government with Elders and Deacons** The Capitol Hill Baptist Church has this form of organization. Says their pastor, Mike Dever, "All churches have had individuals who have performed the functions of elders even if they were called by another name. In the NT, they were called elders or overseers, and there was always more than one (a plurality) being talked about. They were needed in the NT and they are needed now" (*Nine Marks of a Healthy Church: Biblical Church Leadership*) See also this [the Capitol Hills Baptist church constitution.](#))

These churches select elders to oversee the administration of the church and return the office of deacon to the benevolence/assisting role of the New Testament. The eldership in these churches usually includes the pastor, perhaps other paid ministerial staff members, and lay members of the church. It would be noted that this approach should require that members of the eldership meet the qualifications in 1st Timothy 3:1-7, including being apt to teach the Word of God. Some may ask, "Why not have the deacons function as elders, just not change the name?" If Deacons were to act as elders, who would carry out the role the Bible assigns to the deacons?

The elders would fulfill the Biblical assignment for elders; not simply being church business leaders, but spiritual leaders in the truest sense. For example, the bylaws of the Park Avenue Baptist Church in Titusville, Florida specify in part:

"The elders are responsible for providing the vision and direction to the church. They are responsible for the government of the church as representatives of the people and God. They shall pastor the people by providing spiritual guidance, teaching, and by equipping the people for the work of the ministry. The elders, with the assistance of the deacons, shall make provision for each member to receive watchcare. The main function of the elders is to provide the atmosphere and structure to enable individuals to develop their relationship with God and each other by appropriating the character of Jesus Christ and functioning daily in obedience to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit."

**4) Changing the Organization of the Deacons** Some churches organize their deacons to take care of administration and ministry with different deacon teams. One church went to having administrative and ministry deacons. One should note that this is really a variation of having elders and deacons, just not changing the name from deacons or requiring one to meet the qualifications for elders.

**5) Dropping the Administration Function of Deacons and Relying on Committees.** These churches go all out for deacon ministry and leave all administrative functions to the staff and the committees of the church. Sometimes, the church council becomes the equivalent of ruling elders.

**6) Adding Ministry to the Responsibilities of Deacons.** Some churches try to get their deacons moving in a more biblical direction by *adding* ministry to their concept of deaconship. They do not delete the old approach to leadership which, in their fellowship, would arouse hostility from more traditional members. Their deacons continue to operate like a board of elders, but add ministry to their expectations.

### **Observations and Cautions:**

No church should attempt any changes in its by-laws without a prior change of heart and of mind; or serious division may result in the church.

No changes made should create a vacuum. Even churches structured in an unbiblical manner have found ways to get things done. Changes should not produce chaos.

Accountability provides protection for everyone; there must be a way to leave it in place, in a structure which is Biblical and which fosters respect for the office of pastor and other ministerial positions.

Merely changing the terminology or giving lip-service to biblical roles is insufficient. The Lord's work must actually be done in the Lord's way.

If a church wants to choose to use its deacons as a board of ruling elders, then those deacons (now ruling elders mislabeled) must do the work of elders and meet the qualifications for elders,

as enumerated in Scripture. Otherwise, they may lack the necessary Biblical mindset to guide the church. Churches which do this often drift from their God-given mission. Ultimately, a congregation has to decide if they are a church under the authority of God's Word - in practice - or not. If so, they will have to structure their government in a biblical way using biblical terminology.

The purpose of deacons is to serve the Lord by conducting the caring ministry of the church - doing the work of benevolence, visiting the sick, being alert to the spiritual needs of the congregation - and by promoting unity within the church, thus freeing the pastor(s) to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word, and facilitating the spread of the gospel.

***It may be necessary for deacons to assume additional responsibilities to meet the needs of the modern world, but it is never acceptable to delete the original, Biblical functions of the office.***

## The Seven Essentials Of A Powerful New Testament

Before we examine the seven church priorities/essentials, we need to look at two additional priorities first – ***prayer and repentance***. These need to be looked at seriously and not as haphazardly as we sometimes do in the church. The church of North America has been in 50+ years of spiritual drift and decline. We make little impact on the culture around us. Deeper prayer and genuine repentance provide the power necessary for the church to accomplish its purpose and serve as the very heart of our intimacy with God.

The five-fold purpose/function of the church without prayer and repentance is doomed to continue with little impact. Therefore, though we recognize the five functions/purposes of the church – ***evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship*** – we begin by emphasizing prayer and repentance as the absolute essential “triggers” to the empowerment of the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to be the church God has called us to become to **THIS** generation!

When the church (and any church – with or without a pastor – can accomplish this) incorporates/establishes prayer and repentance as a stronger emphasis/priority in the church, then the church is empowered.

Without prayer and repentance being incorporated strongly in the church, we ***have little hope for real change or significance of impact to the communities we serve!*** There is hope, but we must change! Any basic study of the scriptures reveals the importance of the church returning to a stronger focus on prayer and repentance. There are 3 questions we could ask that reveals the necessity of a stronger emphasis:

- What was the precise way God brought ALL 12 major revivals of the Old Testament?
- What were the primary patterns that caused the awesome power in the early church?
- What was God’s specified principle in ALL of history’s Great Spiritual Awakenings?

The answer for ALL 3 questions is EXACTLY the same. ***They UNITED God’s people in fervent prayer, deep spiritual cleansing, and clear preaching of God’s Word.***

Since we KNOW there has NEVER been great empowerment and renewal without prayer and repentance, *why in the world do we think we can neglect them as central priorities in the life and work of the church today?* We cannot just “throw them into the mix” and dabble what we do in prayer. We cannot just “mumble – “and God please forgive me of my sins.” Apparently, we just “forget” to engage in the most essential elements necessary for full power and closeness with God. Please understand, my definition of “forget” is marginalized (not of top priority or emphasis/tagged on). We need to bathe everything in prayer. We should weep because we have sinned against God! ***By returning to the following patterns – beginning with fervent prayer and genuine repentance, we will recapture the closeness and the power with God! If we fail to return to these patterns, we will continue to decline as we continue to “play church!”***

**Joel 2:12-18**

<sup>12</sup> "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; <sup>13</sup> And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.

<sup>14</sup> Who knows whether He will not turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?

<sup>15</sup> Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,

<sup>16</sup> Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.

<sup>17</sup> Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

**Deliverance Promised**

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people.

**James 4:8-10**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

**James 4:8-10**

Amplified Bible (AMP)

<sup>8</sup>Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

<sup>9</sup>[As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].

<sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant].

*Put simply---IF the church will place serious, CONSISTENT emphasis on the 7 essential elements, it "WILL bear MUCH fruit that REMAINS (John 15: 16)"*

**Churches do not have to be "perfect" in all seven elements, but they do have to be INTENTIONAL and serious in their efforts!** In the book, *Seeking God To Seek A Pastor*, Gregory Frizzell declares that these 7 elements should serve as a church's "compass" and "biblical plumb line."

**A POWERFUL New Testament Church places a major SUSTAINED focus on corporate and personal prayer:** According to Scripture, united prayer is ABSOLUTELY crucial to full church empowerment and fellowship. Like NOTHING else, corporate prayer is “God’s primary means of manifesting His awesome presence among His people.” *Selah*

<p>Mark 11:17          And He <i>began</i> to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”</p>
<p>Acts 2:1          The Day of Pentecost</p> <p>“ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.”</p>
<p>Acts 2:42-47</p> <p><sup>42</sup> They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> and they <i>began</i> selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.</p>
<p>Acts 4:31-32</p> <p><sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and <i>began</i> to speak the word of God with boldness.          Sharing among Believers</p> <p><sup>32</sup> And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one <i>of them</i> claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.</p>
<p>James 5:16</p> <p><sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.</p>

**A POWERFUL New Testament Church UNDERSTANDS the importance of periodic, God-directed times of deep spiritual cleansing and renewal:** Deep spiritual cleansing and times of genuine spiritual renewal are patterns in a healthy church. For the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to experience the power of God in the fulfillment of its responsibilities as the church, the element of deep spiritual cleansing is a non-negotiable principle! And I am NOT talking about a “series of meetings” that we half-heartedly refer to as “a revival.” I am talking about a church-wide process to take believers through deep spiritual examination and cleansing in ALL areas of our lives – attitudes, thoughts, words, relationships, actions, OMISSIONS, full surrender to the LORDSHIP of Christ.

2 Chronicles 7:14

<sup>14</sup> and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Psalms 51:10-15

<sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. <sup>13</sup> *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You. <sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; *Then* my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, That my mouth may declare Your praise.

2 Chronicles 7:1

The Shekinah Glory

<sup>1</sup> Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

**A POWERFUL New Testament Church EMBRACES the preaching of the WHOLE counsel of God's Word:** It is ESSENTIAL for the spiritual development/discipleship needs of the church that the pastor (as well as all those who teach the Bible) be committed to expository preaching of balanced doctrine and theology. He/they should not just pick out “hot topics,” popular themes, “Gospel-lite, etc. No – truly biblical pastors/teachers will preach and teach to a wide range of needs, doctrines, and theology.

The kind of pastor we need – as well as the kind of pastor we desire as a church – should be committed to developing a STRONG Bible study/Sunday School, discipleship training, personal growth, marriage and family emphasis, STEWARDSHIP training, etc. etc. It is crucial that we know what the Bible has to say about all the facets of life that we encounter.

In a world that is filled with a lack of knowledge concerning the Bible including many church members, as well as the post-modern culture we now live in that has no working knowledge of all things biblical, it is essential that genuine believers have a solid foundation of the Bible to both mature in their walk with the Lord and to stand FIRM in the face of all they encounter in the world. This should be a high priority as we seek out our pastor! It should be our desire for a Bible-centered Preaching/Teaching/Discipleship ministry in our church.

Acts 20:27

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

**A POWERFUL New Testament Church places ENORMOUS emphasis on EVANGELISM and MISSIONS:** We are not talking about an emphasis whereby we just pray for and support others, but we add to that dimension a genuine emphasis on US becoming personally engaged in reaching people in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and throughout ALL nations! We (the pastor that is to come; the church leadership; genuine Christ-following church members) should be committed to evangelism – preaching strong evangelistic sermons; robust outreach strategies with BROAD personal engagement in the process; SUNDAY SCHOOL – the sustained growth of the church is through the Bible study program (Sunday School), THEREFORE we all ought to be involved in Sunday School; soul-winning, evangelistic campaigns whereby each of us are ready, willing, and able to share our faith and bring people into the family of God!

There are a couple of statements that need to be made and take note:

Unless and until a church places MAJOR, sustained emphasis on evangelism and missions we can NEVER be called a “New Testament Church.”

We cannot do Acts 1:8 until we experience Acts 1:4, 4: 31 – 32 (deep prayer, surrender, and spiritual fullness)

Acts 1:4 “Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” <i>He said</i> , “you heard of from Me;
Acts 4:31-32 <sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and <i>began</i> to speak the word of God with boldness.
Matthew 28:18-20 <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
Acts 1:8  <sup>8</sup> but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

**A POWERFUL New Testament Church places a strong priority on ever-deepening patterns of worship:** There is no question that true worship is central to our very purpose. It is also true that genuine worship is crucial to the release of God’s full manifest presence. For this reason, churches must desire ever-stronger patterns of worship and music ministries. Our new pastor needs to be committed to leading the church in this direction and still not alienate large portions of the church in the process. We must learn/realize that genuine worship of the Lord Jesus Christ in Spirit and in Truth is far more than a particular music style, huge numbers of trained musicians, or great orchestration. ***When worship is genuine, Spirit-led, and solid in content, it will be powerful!*** True worship is a matter of the heart.

Psalm 22:3 <sup>3</sup> Yet You are holy, You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
Psalm 100:4-5 <sup>4</sup> Enter His gates with thanksgiving <i>And</i> His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting <i>And</i> His faithfulness to all generations.
John 4:23 <sup>23</sup> But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.
Hebrews 13:15 God-pleasing Sacrifices <sup>15</sup> Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.
Matthew 15:8 <sup>8</sup> ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

**A POWERFUL New Testament Church has a strong God-given, Kingdom-focused vision:** As a church, we must KNOW the difference between embracing human strategies and receiving a God-revealed vision. As a church, God has a SPECIFIC plan/purpose for us. We are to be obedient to His calling for our church. There are numerous “good things” we could become engaged in as a church. However, as HIS church we are to be obedient to His command for the church we serve in His Name. *“Noble causes do not replace God’s call upon YOUR life!”*

<b>Proverbs 29:18</b> <sup>18</sup> Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law.
<b>Matthew 6:33</b> <sup>33</sup> But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
<b>Ephesians 5:17</b> <sup>17</sup> So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
<b>Acts 1:8</b> <sup>8</sup> but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

**A POWERFUL New Testament Church has strong patterns of loving fellowship and caring ministry:** In several passages of scripture, Jesus literally tied our evangelistic witness and spiritual power to deep love and unity among the believers. If church relationships are strained, God’s Spirit is quenched! If God’s Spirit is quenched, evangelism is hindered and the name of Christ is dishonored. It goes without saying that loving unity in Christ is ESSENTIAL to our power/impact as His church and to the glory (or dishonor) we bring to God’s name!

**Ephesians 4:17**

Amplified Bible (AMP)

<sup>17</sup>So this I say and solemnly testify in [the name of] the Lord [as in His presence], that you must no longer live as the heathen (the Gentiles) do in their perverseness [in the folly, vanity, and emptiness of their souls and the futility] of their minds.

**Ephesians 4:30**

Amplified Bible (AMP)

<sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [do not offend or vex or sadden Him], by Whom you were sealed (marked, branded as God's own, secured) for the day of redemption (of final deliverance through Christ from evil and the consequences of sin).

**John 13:34-35**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**John 17:21**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>21</sup> that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

**Acts 2:42-47**

<sup>42</sup> They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

**1 Corinthians 12:14-20**

<sup>14</sup> For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> But now there are many members, but one body.

These are the ESSENTIAL ----- BIBLICAL parameters of a New Testament, REVIVED church.  
Which areas of your church needs the most urgent focus?