

Appointed to Serve

While the Jerusalem church was increasing in number, a problem arose that threatened their unity (Acts 6:1). Some Hellenistic Jews felt that the native Hebrew widows were receiving preferential treatment. They felt that their widows were not receiving equal benevolence.

This problem could have divided the brethren. It could have also distracted the apostles from the work of evangelism. The apostles instructed the brethren to appoint seven faithful men to oversee this benevolent work (Acts 6:3-5). These men appear to have been the first deacons appointed in the church.

The church in Philippi also appointed qualified men to be their deacons (Philippians 1:1). Who are deacons? What is their role in the local church?

Sadly, many see deacons as nothing more than church “maintenance men.” Some view them as “junior elders.” They see being a deacon as a step most take before becoming an elder. This is unbiblical! My mentor Max Dawson once said, “In many churches, the elders are doing the preacher’s work. The preacher is doing the elders’ work. And the deacons don’t know what to do.”

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Let’s consider some important Biblical facts about these appointed servants of God.

Deacons are servant leaders in the church.

- The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word “diakonos.” This word means “servant, minister, attendant, and helper.” The word is both a noun and a verb (Matthew 20:26, 28; 2 Timothy 4:5; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:15; Romans 13:4).
- All Christians are to be servants and ministers in the kingdom (1 Peter 4:10; John 12:26).
- The word is also used to refer to certain men who meet spiritual qualifications and are appointed to the office of deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- These are zealous about serving God’s people. They equip and facilitate works of service (Ephesians 4:11-12). The seven men appointed by the Jerusalem church almost certainly involved others in their benevolent service to the needy widows.

Deacons are over a specific work.

- Deacons are appointed by the church and have assigned tasks (Acts 6:3-4). While the elders have the authority to set up parameters for their work, they are “put in charge of the task.” They should be trusted to make decisions. They should not have to be micromanaged by the shepherds.
- Can you imagine the seven deacons in Jerusalem being micromanaged by the apostles? That would have defeated one of their primary purposes for being appointed in the first place (Acts 6:4)!
- The work our deacons have charge over allows the shepherds and preachers to focus on their primary work (1 Peter 5:2; 2 Timothy 4:2).

Deacons are a critical part of church growth.

- Our deacons help fulfill many needs in this church. Many of these needs are done behind the scenes, but they are critical to God’s work in this place.
- God used deacons to ensure that the devil did not hinder the work of the gospel!

Deacons are a blessing from God!

- Our deacons help fulfill many needs in this church. Many of these needs are done behind the scenes, but they are critical to God's work in this place.
- We need to be mindful of their service to us. We need to be inspired by their service and ask them if we can be useful to them (John 13:17). We need to pray for them and their families. We need to thank God for them every day!

Conclusion:

Are you serving the greatest servant of all (Matthew 20:28)?

- Shawn Jeffries