

DEEPER TEACHINGS
(MEAT OF THE WORD)

#77

THE OFFICE OF A DEACON

By Jack Enlow

Brother Jack was a missionary in Peru when he came into our midst. He was a very anointed teacher of the Word and was used to help get this end-time Word to the people of Peru. He traveled extensively among our groups and was much appreciated by this part of the Body of Christ. He has passed to the other side and will be remembered for his contribution to our perfection.

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"And let these also first be proved; then let them use THE OFFICE OF A DEACON, being found blameless...For they that have used THE OFFICE OF A DEACON well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." I Timothy 3:10, 13

The time has come for teaching on the office of a deacon: the requirements, the function, and the order for setting in deacons. A number of questions have been raised on the subject, such as: Are deacons young elders, or elders in training? Do we need deacons today? Why haven't deacons been appointed by us before this? Are deacons part of the five-fold ministry? Are they in the husband-ministry, the bride-congregation, or are they something in between?

Our purpose is to carefully consider from the Word of God and with the help of the Holy Spirit what God would have us understand about deacons.

ACTS 1: 1, 2 - "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen."

The Gospels are treatises of that which Jesus began both to do and teach. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of that which Jesus did and taught by His Spirit, working through human vessels.

Beginning in the Book of Acts, we find the establishing of the Church of Jesus Christ, as first the foundation is laid and then built upon by means of a progressive unfolding by the Spirit of God of doctrine, ministry, order, and government in the Church.

In the same way, at this End Time, when the foundation is being re-laid, and all things are being restored to the Church, the Spirit of God is bringing forth through

anointed vessels a gradual unfolding and establishing of all things needful to lead us on to perfection.

ACTS 15:6, 25, 28 - "And the APOSTLES and ELDERS came together for to consider of this matter ... It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men . . . For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."

Five times in Acts 15 the apostles and elders are mentioned together (please note that although deacons had been appointed before this, they were not included here) as the ones who gathered together to consider matters of doctrine and order.

The Father ministry has over the years considered the advisability of appointing deacons, but there was never a complete agreement nor full witness that the time had come for such a step. But last year as we gathered together to consider this matter, "being assembled with one accord ... it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" to begin to move towards setting in deacons. Thus is this teaching. In the original Greek of the New Testament, the word DIAKONOS is translated "deacon," minister" or "servant." The verb DIAKONEW, which comes from DIAKONOS, means "to minister," "to administer," "to serve," or "to use the office of a deacon." The noun DIAKONIA also comes from DIAKONOS, and is translated ministering," ministration," "administration," office," "relief," or "service."

These three words-DIAKONOS, DIAKONEW, and DIAKONIA are used in reference to Jesus, Paul and the apostles, Martha, house servants, and all of us as we serve and minister. Thus our word study helps us to understand that there is no word in the original Greek language which is limited to, and which describes, the office and function of a deacon. The Biblical concept and function is found in the passage in Acts 6 where the first deacons were chosen and appointed.

ACTS 6:1-6 - "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily, ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the - ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Pannenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them."

As we examine this passage we find in the King James Version that there is no reference to "deacons." However, as we study the Greek language, we find that in verse 1 the word "ministration" is DIAKONIA, the word "serve" in verse 2 is DIAKONEW, and the word "ministry" in verse 4 is DIAKONIA.

There is a clear setting forth in these verses that which is the function of a deacon. And this office is clearly contrasted with the ministry of the twelve. While deacons were chosen and appointed for the business (vs. 3) of "the daily ministration" in order to "serve tables," the twelve were, as a result, and in this way, to be left free to spend their time in the ministry of the Word and in prayer.

The twelve were to minister in spiritual things, to spiritual needs, while the deacons would serve in natural things, to the natural needs.

The office of a deacon, then, is not a preparatory ministry for those who would later become elders. It is rather a ministry in daily matters to leave free those who are called to a ministry in the Word. While it would not be an impossible thing for a deacon to become an elder, it would

be uncommon; and the elder, in order to best fulfill that ministry, would need to leave to others the ministry of serving tables.

1Tim 3:1 This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. 11 Even so *must their* wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We believe that Scriptures teach that bishops, elders, and pastors, are one and the same office, even while the different terms express the different qualifications and functions of that ministry. Therefore, in this Scripture, we will use the term most often used, that of elder.

The first thing we want to observe about both elders and deacons is that there are very high standards set forth as requirements for these offices—both must be examples in their walk and testimony before all men. Many of the requirements for the one office and for the other are the same. But now what we especially want to note are the

differences. Verse 2 says that the elder must be “apt to teach,” and verse 5 states that the elder is to “take care of” (govern) the Church of God. Thus there are clear-cut differences between elders and deacons.

ELDERS govern, watch over, feed the Church, and minister to spiritual needs, as they give forth the Word of God, and as they counsel and teach.

DEACONS are not part of the government, do not occupy themselves in teaching and preaching in the same way that elders do (although of course there are those sharing times in the services when deacons may also share), are not elders in training, but look after the daily ministration, serve tables.

Let us consider the function of a deacon as set forth in other Scriptures, and as defined within the framework of the order which God has given us.

1CORINTHIANS 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

The deacon is one whom God has set in the church as a helper.

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to

the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering*: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Paul begins this chapter that speaks of a functioning body with gifts and ministries and proper relationships one with another, by exhorting us to present our bodies a living sacrifice. Any calling, ministry, gift, function, is only an opportunity to serve, to give ourselves as living sacrifices.

Then in verse 3, every man is exhorted “not to think of himself more highly that he ought to think.” As we consider our place and function in the Body of Christ, the danger is always to conclude that we have a higher place, a greater ministry than that which we have. God, in His love and grace, gives us a Word, an anointing, an understanding, and suddenly one becomes convinced that his calling and maturity are beyond that which anyone can recognize in him—even the Father ministry somehow just doesn’t discern it!! But of course our concern should not be to strive for some recognition beyond that which we have attained to, but rather to find that place which God has ordained for us and to serve faithfully there.

Verse 7 says, “Or ministry (diakonia), let us wait on our ministering.” One may have a ministry of giving, of showing mercy (vs8), of distributing to the necessity of the saints (vs 13). There are many special ways in which a deacon may serve.

1Pe 4:9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging. 10 As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

There are two types of ministering spoken of here. In verse 10 there is a ministering as good stewards according to the gift received, while in verse 11, it mentions speaking as the oracles of God. Again, the contrast is that between a ministry of helps, and a ministry of the Word.

In the local assembly and on the corporate farm, deacons might function in some of these ways (although this is not to limit the office of a deacon, nor to suggest that those involved in these activities are necessarily serving as deacons): helps, distributing to the necessity of saints, ministering through literature, tapes, schools, areas of work on the farm, etc.

How are deacons chosen? In Acts 6 the twelve instructed the others to look out among themselves and to choose qualified men (1Tim 3 says those who first are proved), who then were appointed, (the word in the original is the same as when Titus ordained elders), ordained by the apostolic ministry with the laying on of hands.

The order which we have felt to establish, then, is that the brethren (especially through local elders) recognize and choose those who have proven themselves as called and qualified. Then the apostolic ministry (and we feel it would be greater wisdom whenever possible that there be more than one Father ministry present to witness to and ordain deacons) by the laying on of hands will set in those who are chosen.

Since in Christ there is neither male nor female, just as women can be elders, they can also be deaconesses. In Romans 16:1-2, in the Spanish language, it speaks of Phebe as a deaconess, who has been a helper to many.

Of the seven deacons appointed in Acts 6, five are never mentioned again. But two, Stephen and Philip, are afterwards found evangelizing, God confirming their Word with signs following. This would indicate that while all deacons are not called to be evangelists, yet there is a two-fold witness that a deacon may minister as an evangelist.

Now we would like to make some concluding remarks about the office of a deacon. The matters of separate deacons

meetings, and of elders and deacons meeting together, simply depend upon the needs that might arise for such meetings.

In our assemblies we are finding that some who have been ordained as elders, or recognized as elders, really do not have that calling and ministry within them. They have strived to fulfill something, move in an anointing, authority, place, and ministry of the Word, which is not in them. Since this is so, some elders have been asked just to lay down completely their eldership. Others, who have been set in as elders, but are not fulfilling that ministry, really should be serving in the office of a deacon. Therefore, we are asking every elder who obviously is not fulfilling his eldership, to wait before the Lord, and find out just where his true calling is. The Father ministry will help you in this, and you would be wise to go to them, sharing what is in your heart, and seeking counsel so that you might be in the place of God's choosing.

We rejoice as God leads us more and more into a perfect order. The order is not an end in itself, but only an instrument whereby growth, life, fruit, may spring forth. As deacons are set in, and as they serve faithfully in their office, we believe we shall see God's hand of blessing on it, for our good, and for His glory.