

The Incredible Blessing of Deacon Ministry Acts 6

Intro: Nowhere in Acts 6 are the men called deacons whom the church selected to serve them, but their service is everything deacons should be and do (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Even the modern church bases its deacon ministry paradigm on the men who served in Acts 6. Let's take a closer look at deacon ministry.

First: The Need for Deacons. 1

In Acts 2-5, the church suffered external trouble. Now, Satan hoped to 'divide and conquer' the church by raising up one group against the other.

- a) A growing church body needs watch care – *"the disciples were increasing in number"*
- b) The healthy church body ministers to its own – *"the daily distribution"*

The early church took seriously its responsibility to support widows. We may safely assume this support was offered to others in need also.

- c) Every church body experiences need – *"their widows were being neglected"*

Early in the life of the Jerusalem church, the Greek Jews complained that the Hebrew Jews were neglecting their widows in whatever care the church was providing each day.

These verses demonstrate that, as the church grew, it necessarily organized itself, collected money, and distributed funds to those in need.

It would be easy for the Greek Jews to consider the Hebrew Jews as 'holier than thou' and the Hebrew Jews to consider the Greek Jews as worldly compromisers. So, the stage is already set for some sort of conflict.

- d) Growth and ministry create opportunities for conflict

It is not suggested that the oversight was deliberate. It may have been poor administration. But in a congregation of that size, it was inevitable that someone be overlooked and that close watch be kept on mercy ministries.

Second: The Elders's Wisdom. 2 & 4

- a) The elders's should focus on preaching the word, directing the church, and counseling the body

ILL – A young man said to Dr. Donald Barnhouse, *“I’d give the world to preach the Bible like you.”* Dr. Barnhouse replied, *“Good, because that is exactly what it will cost you.”* For the elders to say ‘yes’ to the Scripture and prayer, they must say ‘no’ to other things.

- b) And pray
- c) Deacons are selected to *“serve tables,”* care for the physical needs of the body

The idea here is not simply of serving tables but of handling the practical administration of meeting needs.

- d) In this way, the church is cared for spiritually and materially

Third: The Character of Deacons. 3 & 6

- a) Seven is not a magic number

Many things that happen in the book of Acts are descriptive – they tell us what happened – but not prescriptive – they don’t prescribe what should happen

The church did not shun those who were unhappy. Nor did they divide the congregation. Instead, they delegated ministry – even the choosing of the deacons – and brought more people into the everyday work of the church.

- b) The church chooses men of character
- c) Good repute – men the church trusted
- d) Full of the Spirit – spiritual men
- e) Full of wisdom – practical men

The same Greek word (*diakonia*) is used for ‘distribution’ (6:1) and “ministry” (6:4) implying that the deacons service in practical ways affects the spirituality of the church.

- f) The elders then appoint the men to serve

In this scenario, the church body nominated men and the elders oversaw their qualifying.

Fourth: The Result. 5-7

- a) The congregation is pleased/happy/healthy

God confirmed the wisdom of the elders through congregational agreement. The elders must have employed some mechanism to determine the congregation’s approval of the idea.

- b) The congregation gains wisdom – *“the word of God continued to increase”*
- c) The healthy church grew numerically – *“the number of disciples multiplied greatly”*

- d) Inroads were made into the unbelieving community – “a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith”

Note: Pay attention to this. The Greek Jews complained that the Hebrew Jews were neglecting their widows. All the deacons whom the church chose have Greek names. This means the Hebrews trusted the Greeks enough to elect Greek deacons believing that the Greek deacons would not then, retaliate and neglect the Hebrew widows. It's an incredible act of peace-making and preferring one another, on the part of Hebrew believers.

Community Groups:

- 1 – How many of the Heritage deacons can you name?
- 2 – What deacon benefit of deacon ministry have you witnessed or experienced?
- 3 – Talk about the need for deacon ministry, both from verse 1 and your own church experiences.
- 4 – Talk about the benefit of deacon ministry in these verses.
- 4 – Read vs 2-4. How did the deacons serve the elders?
- 5 – Read v 3. What were the character qualifiers for these men?
- 6 – How might the elders have known that deacon ministry pleased the church body?
- 7 – Read vs 5-7. What are some of the results of deacon ministry?
- 8 - Can you think of many modern issues that pose potential threats to church unity?
- 9 – List some ways the Heritage deacons are serving our body and the community.
- 10 – Take time to pray for our deacons.