A CURRICULUM FOR EQUIPPING DEACONS AT FIRST

BAPTIST CHURCH KERSHAW, SOUTH CAROLINA

FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by

Bobby Louis Massey

May 2021

APPROVAL SHEET

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To Jackie, my beloved! My best friend, my companion, and one who challenges me every day to be the best I can for Jesus. You mean the world to me. There are so many things I truly admire about you as a person, as my best friend, and as my bride. Your eyes and smile are like sunshine. As a missionary and elder's wife, you have displayed courageous faith in our Almighty God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

PREFACE

I am thankful for God's grace and mercy in my life. I owe my all to Jesus Christ, whose shed blood paid my ransom and the Holy Spirit who regenerated my soul. My sin debt is paid, the curse of sin has no hold on me, the Son has set me free, and I am free indeed. Throughout my feeble life, I will proclaim Christ and seek to give honor and glory to His name in all that I say and do.

This project is only possible due to the many mentors, elders, teachers, and encouragers in my life. I am eternally grateful for my wife and family, as they have given me grace upon grace during my seemingly never-ending academic journey. I will be forever indebted to their lovingkindness. I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Timothy Beougher who provided encouragement, advice, and warm friendship throughout this long process. Abundant appreciation to Dr. Brad Vaughn, Dr. Jim Law, and Dr. Matt Haste who would never let me get off the horse, being a source of constant inspiration during difficult times.

Additionally, I am thankful for the privilege of serving the Lord with the body of Christ at First Baptist Church Kershaw. Their love and support for our family have been amazing. It is my greatest honor and joy to shepherd this beautiful church. I hope to honor them through this project as we together seek the kingdom.

Bobby Massey

Kershaw, South Carolina

May 2021

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"True leaders are servants who die to themselves so others may flourish. True leaders go forth, not for themselves, but for others, the church follows the only One to die that others may live,"[1] writes Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck. Jesus' life and work provide the perfect model of leadership. Jesus explained to his disciples, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).[2] Additionally, before Jesus departed from earth, he presented a compelling illustration of servant leadership to his disciples as he washed their feet (John 13:12). Servant leadership is not something new. Two thousand years ago, Christ's life and ministry in its entirety can be characterized as one of humble service and loving care for the needy (Matt 20:28; John 15:13). Simply stated, Jesus' servant lifestyle is the model for all Christians, particularly deacons, the servant arm of the church.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, rapid expansion of the early church through the preaching of the gospel advocated the necessity and presented the opportunity for the creation of specific ministers with the duty to serve (Acts 2:41). The book of Acts describes these new ministers as "table-waiters," utilized for the physical service to the church (6:1-7). The word deacon (*diakonos*), used thirty times in the New Testament, translates as "servant," "minister," or "helper."[3] Although the seven chosen ministers in Acts 6 were not called "deacons" (*diakonos*), the job for which they were chosen was "to deacon"

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[1] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 5.

[2] All Scripture quotations are from English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

[3] Gerald P. Cowen, *Who Rules the Church? Examining Congregational Leadership and Church Government* (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 102.

(*diakonein*).[4] Consequently, as the twelve apostles were limited in their serving, these devoted ministers of Jesus became models of Christianity for all to emulate. Created to serve the practical needs of the growing congregation, the seven servant leaders allowed the apostles to prioritize the ministry of the Word and prayer, which in turn expanded the church.

Later in church history, the apostle Paul utilizes the term "deacon" three times in an official sense to refer to the holder of a specific office (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12).[5] Reflecting service, care, and concern for the church and community, deacons are to imitate Christ in caring for the poor and needy. By God's design, the distinct office of deacon is to administer the church's practical care ministries. Accordingly, Henry Webb states that deacons are the servant models for the church and must model Christ to the congregation.[6] Therefore, the office of deacon, by its very nature, is a living illustration of servanthood. Deacons are champions of the gospel, vital to the church's stability and health.

For this reason, the congregation should be able to look to its deacons to imitate the risen Christ through servant leadership daily. Unfortunately for First Baptist Church Kershaw, for the past thirty years prior to my arrival in 2015, the subtle drift away from the authority of Scripture led to the spiritual and numerical decline of the church. Consequently, the diaconate was left untrained and without vision. Therefore, an opportunity for growth and renewal in the area of deacon servant leadership is needed.

To continue to bring revitalization to FBCK, I must equip the deacons for servant leadership. In all respects, I must bring to fruition God's vision for the diaconate to the diaconate. Elders are to be equippers of the saints, particularly in the area of its servant leaders, the ministers of mercy (Eph 4:12). As the only elder of FBCK at the time of this project, I helped the diaconate biblically define their role, assisted them in

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[4] Cowen, *Who Rules the Church?*, 101.

[5] Cowen, *Who Rules the Church?*, 103.

[6] Henry Webb, *Servant Models in the Church* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1980), 1.

developing into their new calling, deployed them into active service, all while transitioning the church toward a plurality of elders (Acts 20:28).

Context

In many respects, FBCK resembles the typical First Baptist Church across America. Although the church has always been financially stable with exceptional facilities, membership has drastically declined. The former elder, the senior pastor, brought much needed stability to the church as he served faithfully for twenty-eight years; however, a deficiency in scriptural authority, poor leadership development, pragmatic approaches to ministry, and traditionalism affected the church's morale and caused the church's decline. Additionally, the deacon body was in desperate need of leadership and encouragement.

For decades, members of FBCK occasionally nominated biblically unqualified members for the office of deacon through a popularity vote. Moreover, some members were appointed into the office, hoping they would participate more in the church. As a result, some deacons struggled to prioritize their commitment to the office. Incidentally, the church cultivated an indifferent view toward the diaconate. Unsound methods of nomination and ineffective leadership approach inadvertently led to the decline of the deacon ministry and a loss of respect from the congregants.

Concerning the work of the diaconate as a whole, the deacon body at FBCK had become unproductive. In the mid-1900s, the FBCK diaconate identified itself as the board or council of deacons. These deacons met around the boardroom table as they assumed management of church affairs. Consequently, the senior pastor and staff members were directly responsible to the board of deacons for matters related to administration. The board acted as the authority over church affairs, including property, the senior pastor and staff's salary, finances, and many other leadership duties. Any outlying committees submitted their recommendations to the board for final approval, often without congregational affirmation. This board unapologetically exercised authority over the

congregation. For reasons unknown, the congregation assumedly trusted the council of deacons and continued to allow them to lead in this manner for many years.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, the senior pastor formalized FBCK to adopt a structural model of ministry that included multiple ministry teams to oversee the many areas of ministry. With the senior pastor as *ex officio* of each group, the new structure removed power from the council of deacons and established control back to the congregation through ministry teams. With the senior pastor as the "father" of the system, his strategic placement allowed him to be the primary influencer over each team. At this point, the diaconate was left to menial tasks and acted as a sounding board for the senior pastor. Although congregational involvement and pastoral leadership are vital, equally important and necessary to congregational health is the biblical office of deacon properly equipped and operational in the life of church ministries.

As a result of this new church structure, with twenty-three new ministry teams, coupled with the senior pastor's micro-management leadership style, the diaconate began its decline. The senior pastor exhaustingly attended to the spiritual affairs of church members while the ministry teams tended to the majority of the administrative matters of the church. For these reasons, the diaconate was left unequipped and ineffective. However, in the 1980s, an honest attempt to program the diaconate into the Deacon Family Ministry Plan was launched. Unfortunately, they failed to achieve this goal. Once again, the congregation was left without an adequately functioning diaconate.

Primarily reduced to the minuscule tasks of the church and a monthly meeting where the church calendar was the primary topic of discussion, the diaconate continued to lose favor with the congregation.[7] Although the new church team structure may have seemed promising for a time and served the body well, the new organizational structure ultimately failed to produce a healthy church and a healthy diaconate. Unfortunately, the

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[7] Collected historical information of the church is based upon multiple personal interviews, the bylaws, pictures, former deacons, and personal observations.

teams tended not to meet, were ineffective, and became a formality for decision making. As a consequence, much of the decision-making responsibilities were now back to the senior pastor, giving him immense control of the church.

Through implementation of this project, God will redeem the biblical role of the deacon at FBCK as servant leaders. Churches should challenge their deacons to fulfill their high calling to Christ with passion and honor. A revival of the deacon ministry is vital for sustainable growth at FBCK. These servant ministers need to dedicate themselves to Christ's model of servant leadership not only as their duty but as their new identity. Servant leadership is more than a good idea for ministry or a new church growth model—it is Jesus' command for the diaconal ministry.

A Servant Leader Mindset

Jesus was committed to finding, developing, and dispersing his leaders with his message in his three years of public ministry. With great clarity, he prioritized this strategy to deploy capable leaders into the world so that these leaders and the gospel message would be the catalyst for transforming society. Scripture is not silent on the topic of leadership, specifically church leadership. In Matthew 28:18-20, the disciples of Christ were commissioned to follow his servant leadership model. Jesus' model and ministry provide a prototype for leadership. Clear directives for the biblical model of Christian leaders has been set, particularly in the area of deacons as servant leaders.

In the first pages of *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons,* Thabiti Anyabwile declares, "A church without godly leaders is an endangered church. Moreover, a church that does not train leaders is unfaithful."[8] Accordingly, elders are those who equip and train (Eph 4:12). However, because many Southern Baptist Churches follow a single elder-led polity, these churches often miss the biblical mark in training future leaders. Because the entire congregation is dependent upon one man, he is often overextended in

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[8] Thabiti Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 11.

his responsibilities, often neglecting to equip those in need, specifically the deacons. Furthermore, these pastors are susceptible to becoming authoritarian rulers. Over managing their ministries, monopolize the pulpit, keeping shepherding opportunities for themselves, and purposefully gathering information for their own controlling purposes are all signs of a pragmatic controlling leader.[9] Externally, this type of leadership appears to shepherd and love his sheep; however, this type of ministry practice becomes self-serving, unbiblical, counterproductive, and often leaves the church unfaithful in equipping future leaders.

**Servant Leadership as the Model
of Ministry for Deacons**

The diaconate is often left unappreciated, unproductive, and unequipped for the task to which God has called them. Overtime, deacons can become cynical and discouraged, quickly falling into strategic management and leadership methods, instead of maintaining the ministry of mercy. Unequipped and untrained for the task at hand, though well-intentioned, deacons often default to what they know as leadership by deploying organizational and management strategies acquired from the workplace. C. Gene Wilkes explains, "These recognized leaders hold positions elected by friends and family. They love sitting at the head of the table and never go near the kitchen or nursery. Head of tables has replaced the towel and washbasin as symbols of godly leadership."[10] This practice of leadership intimidates rather than motivates the body of Christ. Man-centered models of leadership are unable to produce humble servanthood.

Harry Reeder explains the worldview of modern contemporary American models of leadership and MBA programs in colleges:

Modern corporate leadership is rooted in self-absorbed concepts of success, ego-driven desire for power, and what is now a socially approved expression of greed

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[9] My observations derive from twenty years of ministry experience in the context of the Southern Baptist and the Chinese House Church networks. Most churches observed have one influential pastor while the diaconate is often ill-equipped.

[10] C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Becoming a Servant Leader* (Nashville: Lifeway, 1996), 5.

that a century ago would have been described as evil. This self-worshipping, man-centered model of leadership is promoted anew every semester through collegiate MBA programs. American educational institutions are the front line of the culture war as the typical university is militantly intolerant to any idea that would propose ethical absolutes in any degree program. Few university MBA programs today instruct future business leaders in the traditional, biblically-based ethic of sacrificial servant leadership. Pragmatism rules. The end justifies the means. Ethics are not absolutes to be obeyed, but obstacles to be overcome. Certainly, the church can profit from aspects of corporate America, but the church is not a business, members are not customers, pastors are not CEOs, and deacons are not a board of directors.[11]

Church leadership should take time to consult the Scriptures, meditate on Jesus' life and practices, and seek the direction and guidance of the New Testament church. Servant leaders must first establish themselves in and through a relationship with God and his scriptures. Narry F. Santos agrees: "The pursuit of worldly authority was not Jesus' way, because it leads to eternal, spiritual ruin while servanthood leads to a glorious future (Mark 8:35)."[12] Not only can disregarding the servanthood motif provided by Jesus be detrimental to one's faith but also detrimental to the vitality of the church.[13] Godly leadership must utilize godly models of ministry.

**Appreciating and Equipping
the Deacon Ministry**

The church is Jesus' body and is to be cared for accordingly (Col 1:18). The diaconate should not be dishonored or neglected, for Paul assures his readers that deacons can obtain great "honor and boldness" within the church (1 Tim 3:13). The first prototype deacons, Philip and Stephen, were champions of the gospel as they served the poor and needy, taught the Scriptures, and evangelized the lost (Acts 7-8). Deacons are to be equipped and launched into ministry, and it is the elder(s) responsibility to equip the diaconate for the work of their ministry (Eph 4:12).

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[11] Harry L. Reeder and Rod Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic: A Biblical Model for Raising Effective Leaders* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 14-15.

[12] Narry F. Santos, "The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154, no. 616 (October-December 1997): 458.

[13] Santos, "The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood," 460.

For reasons unknown, some pastors (single elders) may view the deacons as a group to overcome and avoid rather than a group to equip. A low view of the diaconate may be grounded in a low opinion of Scripture. With the Bible as the final authority for all things church, it would serve elders well to keep in mind Jesus' intentions for deacons. Elders, who instruct the body with the Word, ought to view the diaconate as a catalyst for church health and growth. Paul's list of qualifications for the two offices of elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 were not mere suggestions but clear directives on church constructs. Furthermore, when the church obtains thoroughly and adequately equipped deacons for ministry, male deacons may begin to "aspire" to be elders (1 Tim 3:1). Godly elders should view the diaconate as a possible training ground for future shepherds.

Honoring Christ and his Word should hold preeminence in the ministry of the church. Scripture does not represent deacons as second-rate servants with second-rate tasks—they are an essential part of the body, necessary for church health. With these servant leaders in mind, David Schafer gracefully writes of deacon servant leadership: "Servant leadership is not a euphemism for 'low-quality,' 'cut-rate,' 'B-grade' leadership. Excellence, energy, imagination, creativity— the requirements of servant leadership are, if anything, far more rigorous than those for authoritarian control."[14] The office of a deacon, although a position of servitude, is a position of honor as deacons serve their King Jesus. High regard for the office of deacons, as established by Scripture, is crucial for church health.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities between the offices of elder and deacon is critical because in many churches, notably Southern Baptist churches, the deacons are the governing board or council and often function as quasi-elders. Although aspects of the elders' and deacons' ministry roles overlap, elders must meet the biblical qualifications prescribed by Scripture and then be congregationally affirmed. Deacons functioning in

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[14] David J. Schlafer, "The Leader as Servant," *Sewanee Theological Review* 36, no. 4 (1993), 512.

the place of the elders is a serious matter. For these reasons, the diaconal ministry must be methodically defined, developed, and deployed.

Rationale

FBCK is currently growing, and the strain on pastoral leadership is increasing. Not only would moving toward a plurality of elders offer relief, but deploying a suitably qualified and equipped deacon ministry team would serve the congregation and community well. Current growth projections necessitate that the church expand its leadership base for further ministry effectiveness. Sound biblical knowledge and clarification of roles and relationships must be appropriately communicated and taught so that the deacons, individually and corporately, perform well. Therefore, FBCK leadership desired to equip the current diaconate for servant leadership. This project aimed to implement a training session with a curriculum for the diaconate to produce servant leaders who would share in the overall ministry of FBCK.

The course curriculum was primarily taught from the New Testament and explicitly focused on Jesus' servant model of leadership. Providing the perfect model of leadership, Jesus explained to his disciples, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Additionally, before he departed from earth, Jesus presented a compelling illustration of servant leadership to his disciples as he washed their feet (John 13:12). Simply stated, Jesus' servant lifestyle is the model for all followers, particularly the deacon ministry.

Intentional leadership development of deacons is fundamental in being obedient to Scripture; moreover, a strong foundation of leadership facilitates growth. While the deacons at FBCK no longer function as quasi-elders, there was a need to clarify biblical roles and responsibilities so that FBCK would continue with stable biblical constructs of ecclesiology. At FBCK, there was not only a need for equipping but a shared desire to be equipped for gospel ministry.

Purpose

        The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum to train deacons at First Baptist Church Kershaw, South Carolina, to be servant leaders.

Goals

        Three goals guided the training and leadership development of the diaconate at First Baptist Church Kershaw. Jesus' servant model of leadership was the foundation of these goals.

1. The first goal was to assess the current understanding of servant leadership among the deacons.

2. The second goal was to develop a two-session curriculum on biblical servant leadership.

3. The third goal was to increase the deacons' knowledge of servant leadership by implementing the curriculum.

Research Methodology

        Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the current level of knowledge of servant leadership among the deacons. Before the first session, the Fundamentals of Servant Leadership Assessment (FSLA) was administered to the diaconate.[15] This assessment gauged each deacon's current understanding of servant leadership. This goal was considered successfully met when the deacon body completed the FSLA, and the results were compiled electronically, yielding a clear picture of the deacons' understanding of servant leadership.

        The second goal was to develop a two-session curriculum on biblical servant leadership. The project was organized through the presentation of six chapters, three chapters per session. Each session format included interactive Power Point teaching, a curriculum guide for note taking with reading assignments inserted, and group discussion. The topics of the session included (1) foundations and biblical framework for

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[15] See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee before use in the ministry project.

servant leadership and historical trends of Southern Baptist deacons, and (2) practical

tools and instructions for deacon service. Participants were required to complete assigned

homework and engage in group discussions. The course primarily focused on developing

a Christ-like servant leadership character. This goal was measured by a panel consisting

of two FBCK deacons, three local teaching elders, one apologist, and one resident

theologian. The expert panel utilized a rubric to measure the biblical faithfulness, teaching

methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[16] This goal was successfully

met when an expert panel reviewed the curriculum and rated each lesson as meeting or

exceeding the sufficient level for each of the evaluation criteria.

The third goal was to increase the deacons' knowledge of servant leadership.

Participants in this training course were the entirety of FBCK deacons. This goal was

measured by administering the FSLA. The FSLA was again completed by the participants

immediately after the final class session. The questionnaire helped measure any increase

in knowledge about the biblical basis of servant leadership as a deacon. A *t*-test of

independent samples was used to determine a positive statistical difference between the

pre-class and post-class FSLA.[17] This goal was accomplished per the results of the *t*-test,

which demonstrated positive statistical significant differences from the comparison of the

pre- and post-FSLA given during the training series. All class participants were invited to

schedule a follow-up time of discussion with the elder(s) to discuss related material or to

reflect upon their class experience.

Definitions and Delimitations

The following descriptions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Church. Church (*ekklesia*), as defined by Scripture, compromises of those who

have been saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and have been incorporated

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[16] See appendix 2.

[17] See appendix 3.

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into his body through baptism with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:12).[18] On one level, the church is universal, including all believers of all times. On another level, the New Testament refers to a local church as a group of Christians gathered together in a specific geographic location.[19]

Deacons. Deacons are one of two offices in the church, as shown by Scripture (1 Tim 3:8-13, Phil 1:1, Acts 6:1-7). *Deacons* are a group of male and female Christian lay leaders called by God, who humbly serve the church.[20]

Deacon ministry. The *deacon ministry* is the group of deacons within a local church. Deacons are called upon to deal with the material needs of the people, care of the sick and poor, and temporal affairs of the church in general.[21]

Elders. Elders, also called pastors or overseers, are one of two offices in the church, as shown by Scripture (1 Tim 3:1-7, 1 Pet 5:1, 2). According to the New Testament definition of eldership, elders lead the church, teach and preach the Word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine, visit the sick and pray, and judge doctrinal issues.[22]

Leadership. Leadership is the art and science of influencing attitudes, atmosphere, and action that bring about change (hopefully for good) within another person, a group of people, or an organization.[23]

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[18] Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 29.

[19] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 857.

[20] G. M. Burge, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 320.

[21] John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 194.

[22] Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 16.

[23] Bob R. Agee, "Servant Leadership as an Effective Approach to Leadership in the Church," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 43, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 8.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership is the prominent style of leadership modeled by Jesus.[24] Bob Agee argues that *servant leadership* is the standard for biblical leadership.

> A "servant leader" is one who seeks to embody the spirit, attitude, and disposition of the greatest leader of all, Jesus Christ. The servant leader is marked by the impact of the Holy Spirit in his or her life with a spirit characterized by "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal 5: 22-23). If current literature on leadership is correct and effective leadership flows from within and leaders lead out of who they are and not by technique, then this is the beginning place for defining the effective servant leader. His life is marked by a genuine walk with the living Christ day by day.[25]

Christ Jesus exemplifies the essential principles of servant leadership.

Healthy church. A *healthy church* is a congregation that increasingly reflects God's character as his character has been revealed in his Word.[26] Mark Dever utilizes the word *healthy* because it communicates the idea of a body that's living and growing.[27]

Southern Baptist churches. Southern Baptist churches are a body of cooperating churches within the Southern Baptist Convention.[28]

Southern Baptist Convention. The *Southern Baptist Convention* is a fellowship of over 47,000 Baptist churches, whose congregations have organized themselves to accomplish a specific set of missions and ministry initiatives, all for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people everywhere.[29]

There is one delimitation for this project—this project was limited to two weeks, which included pre-assessment, curriculum instruction, and post-assessment.

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[24] David S. Young, *Servant Leadership for Church Renewal: Shepherds by the Living Spring* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999), 18.

[25] Agee, "Servant Leadership," 9.

[26] Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 40.

[27] Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church*, 39, 34.

[28] Southern Baptist Convention, "2018 Annual Church Profile: General Information," accessed March 4, 2020, http://www.sbc.net/BecomingSouthern Baptist/FastFacts.asp.

[29] Southern Baptist Convention, "2018 Annual Church Profile."

Conclusion

God's Word, his Spirit, and his Son are the indispensable basis for the local church. Jesus' example provided people with the perfect model of leadership. Ultimately, an understanding of Jesus' mandate for servant leadership is fundamental to church governance. The deacons' expression of Christlikeness in the church directly correlates to imitating Jesus. Therefore, the deacons' servant leadership model articulates Jesus' imperative to serve the church.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS
FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership is a biblical and practical approach to leadership in the church. Deacons are servant leaders who humbly consider others before themselves (Phil 2:3-5). As guided by Scripture, deacons render humble service for the benefit of others.[1] God has given deacons the wonderful ministry of mercy. No church can afford to neglect what God has established. This chapter sets forth the biblical and theological basis for deacons as servant leaders. Four critical passages in the New Testament give guidance to the understanding of servant leadership. Mark 10:42-45 shows Jesus mandating servant leadership to his followers. John 13:12 displays Jesus' model of servant leadership. Acts 6:1-7 demonstrates the prototypical model of deacons as servant leaders, and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 proves that deacons must be servant leaders.

Mark 10:42-45

Mark 8–10 demonstrates that biblical leaders should seek to serve. Preceding each of Mark's three discourses of Jesus' teaching on humility and greatness is teaching about his suffering.[2] With this pattern in mind, readers can better understand Mark 10:35-45. In Mark 8:31-35, Jesus teaches on his agony, Peter rebukes him, and Jesus next teaches them to "deny themselves and take up his cross and follow him" (v. 34). In Mark 9:31-37, Jesus predicts his death and resurrection, and Jesus immediately teaches them, "Whoever wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Narry Santos agrees

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[1] John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 191.

[2] John C. Hutchinson, "Servanthood: Jesus' Countercultural Call to Christian Leaders," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166, no. 661 (January-March 2009): 56.

with this pattern and further explains Mark's intentions of communicating the authority/servanthood paradox: "Mark carefully arranged Mark 8:22-10:52 by framing the three paradoxical discourses with two healings involving blind men (8:22-26) and (10:46-52). The inclusion of the two healing accounts demonstrations not only Jesus' authority but his servanthood."[3]

Within the immediate context of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, the royal city, James and John, assuming Jesus' impending crowning as king, request a significant gift (Mark 10:37). France explains the gravity of this request: "To speak of sitting (rather than reclining, as at a banquet) on the right (or left) of someone implies a royal throne with the places of highest honor on either side."[4] James and John believed in Jesus' coming kingdom and envisioned themselves as being close to their king, in seats of high honor, with ruling authority. Before any thoughts of assuming the brothers were merely greedy, one must consider James and John's loyalty to Jesus and the specific fact that Jesus had already promised them positions of authority (Matt 19:28).[5] Although the request may seem vain, the brothers were not totally out of line.

James and John misunderstood the type of kingdom Jesus came to establish; a spiritual kingdom was beyond their full comprehension. Fortunately, the great teacher utilized the moment to explain the nature of the new kingdom's definition of greatness and leadership. In short, Jesus asked the brothers if they were able to suffer and die for him. Once again, probably not fully understanding the situation, they responded with a resounding "yes" (Mark 10:38-39). Next, Mark leads the reader to Jesus' monumental declaration of redefining kingdom leadership.

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[3] Narry F. Santos, "The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154, no. 616 (October-December, 1997): 456.

[4] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark,* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 415.

[5] Hutchinson, "Servanthood," 57.

Mark 10:42-45 provides Jesus' most significant statement about servant leadership. In this dialogue, Jesus describes the juxtaposition between two leadership styles: the ruler and the servant. Seizing the occasion to clarify the definition of greatness, Jesus makes an overt claim in describing the type of leadership prescribed in his new movement. Starting with the contrary, Jesus asserts, "Those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them" (v. 42). By Jesus describing the Gentile rulers as "considered," "recognized," or "so-called" rulers, he is insinuating that these arbitrary leaders do not model godly leadership. Jesus regards these rulers as oppressive, exploiting power, and flaunting authority.[6] Far from attaining a heart commitment, conformity of behavior is required, and submission is demanded. Contrary to servant leadership, these leaders tell rather than show, command rather than influence.[7] Jesus is describing the world's default model of leadership as a top-down structure where the leader intends to rely on power instead of weakness.

In contrast to the standard practices of the day, Jesus tells the disciples, "It must not be so among you" (v. 43). However, the verb "to be" is not a warning to behave correctly. Edwards explains this verb as "a description of the way things are in the kingdom of God, and even among the disciples of the kingdom."[8] Domineering leadership in Jesus' church is prohibited. Jesus' expectation of leadership is not only different from the normative cultural principles of leadership but is a counter-cultural ethic, something new. With this in mind, Richards and Hoeldke explain vital implications to this unique style of leadership: "By forsaking the world's kind of leadership, the body leader is sure to be misunderstood. He will seem unimpressive. He will suffer under misunderstanding and

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[6] Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 419.

[7] Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke, *Church Leadership: Following the Example of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 107.

[8] James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 325.

may be reduced at times to near-despair. And it takes so much longer to gain heart response than behavioral conformity."[9] Although the disciples may have envisioned Jesus' kingdom on this earth as having a clear hierarchal leadership structure, Jesus is establishing a sharp contrast of leadership philosophy in his kingdom. Lane agrees, stating, "Jesus is undeniably rejecting the model of leadership implemented by earthly rulers, he redirects the disciples' attention toward the common household in how greatness is to be gained."[10] Mark 10:43-44 goes on to describe this type of leadership philosophy: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be a slave to all." Jesus set forth an unforgettable paradox: greatness is self-giving. Mark's approach to this household metaphor on servanthood is central to the leadership philosophy that Jesus is prescribing for the twelve. The servant or slave is now considered "great."

Jesus commands his disciples not to conform to the practices of ordinary rulers and sets out a new principle of leadership: servanthood. Edwards, agreeing with Jesus' redefining of greatness, remarks, "Greatness will now belong to those who are not great, the slave."[11] In these statements, Jesus is rewriting history and laying the new ground for future leadership. Lane further explains Jesus' transformational statements: "This transforms the question of rank and greatness into the task of service: only by service does one become great."[12] The servants' and slaves' interests are not that of self-service, but the service of others; therefore, the outpouring of self in service to others defines greatness. Through Jesus' life, ministry, and ultimately his crucifixion, the disciples would have had the perfect example of servant leadership modeled and lived out before them. Not only did Jesus exemplify power through humble leadership, but the Servant

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[9] Richards and Hoeldtke, *Church Leadership,* 109.

[10] William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1974), 382.

[11] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark,* 326.

[12] Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark,* 382.

King will also have all power and all authority (Matt 28:18). Edwards provides additional insight: "Not only is this a principle of the leadership of the kingdom of God but a pattern of his own life that is authoritative for and transferable to disciples."[13] If Jesus' self-sacrifice defines his greatness, how much more will a disciple's greatness be determined through his self-giving service?

Verses 43-45 set out a sharp contrast between earthly kingdoms and the operating structures of Jesus' new kingdom ethic of leadership. The irony is that the one, Jesus, who deserves service came to serve, thus typifying the perfect Christian example.[14] The implications for this revolutionary new leadership ethic not only contradict the norm but challenge believers' core beliefs on leadership, thus compelling Christians to live with a radical surrender toward Christ. Jesus' has now established his blueprint for future leaders.

In conclusion, servant leadership was both modeled and declared by Jesus as the leadership style for his future church. Greatness and reward in Jesus' new kingdom will be determined through humble service. This proper theology of Christian leadership being rooted in Scripture and modeled by Jesus is essential in ministry.

John 13:12

Setting forth an example and pattern of humility for his disciples, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.[15] John 13:12 provides a compelling picture of Jesus' expectations of his followers. The dusty and dirty conditions of the area, along with open-toed sandals, would have made foot-washing necessary for all. However, foot washing was reserved

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[13] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark,* 326.

[14] David Platt, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Matthew* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 272.

[15] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel of John,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 468.

for slaves and the lowliest of servants. Revealed here in the Scriptures, Jesus is inaugurating a new Christian ethic of leadership—leaders are first servants.

The passage opens at the Last Supper, where John turns the attention of his readers to this symbolic act of foot washing rather than the Lord's Supper (13:1). The evening meal was being served when Jesus, their teacher and rabbi, laid aside his long outer garments and put a towel around his waist like an apron (13:4). This initial act of preparation for the foot-washing displays Jesus' humility and love. Out of respect for his creation, Jesus demonstrates humility as he lowered himself from the status of the king to the state of a lowly servant. In the same sense, the apostle Paul writes of this glorious humility in his letter to the Philippian church: "Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Phil 2:6-8). Paul knew that, ultimately, Jesus' love for his people brought him to a shameful, yet victorious death on a Roman cross. The single act of dying for one's brother is the ultimate act of love.

John describes for the reader that the Savior of the universe is now wearing a servant's apron around his waist, performing a lowly act performed by non-Jewish slaves in a Jewish household.[16] Jesus is standing in the place of the student, who would have customarily prepared to wash his rabbi's feet. Nevertheless, this great paradox is being exhibited for all to see and experience. This role reversal, or inappropriate action of the teacher, is meant to be a gripping teaching moment for his disciples. The Lord reassures his confused disciples that a complete understanding will come (John 13:7). The disciples needed to be patient as God himself was teaching a practical lesson about himself and their mission.

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[16] Don N. Howell, Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 14.

Additionally, the disciples would have looked at Jesus' action with both awe and shame. Because the first-century cultural context traditionally holds teachers and elders in the highest esteem, to see the one whom they should serve take on the form of a servant would have caused a cultural shock to the disciples. Kruse explains, "The foot washing was carried out, as far as we know, in embarrassed silence."[17] Within this honor and shame first-century context, the teaching moment from the greatest of teachers would have been persuasive and inspiring.

John briefly describes the procedure in which Jesus, with apron fastened around his waist, performs the act of pouring water into a basin and washing the feet of all the disciples while using his apron to clean their feet (13:5). After a brief exchange with the baffled Simon Peter on what it means to be clean, Jesus dresses, sits down in his place, and asked his disciples, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (13:12). In this manner, Jesus was setting up a teaching opportunity in which he will answer the question posed to the disciples.

Jesus explains, "You call me Teacher and Lord, you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you" (13:13-15). The Greek word ὑπόδειγμα (*hypodeigma*) can denote both an "example," and a "pattern."[18] This example was to be "done" or practically followed. Mutual love, humility, and servanthood is the design of the Master for his followers. Therefore, this pattern of leadership is expected by Jesus for his followers.

Whether one's ecclesiology allows for foot washing to be on par with the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper is not for this discussion (1 Tim 5:10); however, it is recognizable that Jesus now expected the disciples to enter into ministry

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[17] Colin G. Kruse, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2003), 279.

[18] A. J. Köstenberger, *John,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 408.

and join him in his mission. Humble servant leadership, by extension, must be the disciples' guiding principle for their work ethic and philosophy of ministry. Kruse explains it well: "Teacher, it was not beneath his dignity to wash their feet, then it was not below their dignity to do the same to one another . . . the greatest of Jesus' disciples must be ready to render humble service to the least."[19] Following Jesus necessitates humble service to one another.

This significant teaching was necessary for Jesus' disciples, and it requires attentiveness. Carson comments, "One of the ways human pride manifests itself in a stratified society is in refusing to take the lower role."[20] Foot washing was an extreme act of humility and was to be the key to their identity and their mission in the world.[21] However, later that same evening, Jesus alludes to the slave analogy as being incomplete by affirming that he considers them friends and not slaves (John 15:15).[22] Howell notes, "First-century slavery meant to perform one's appointed duties without question, and the context of service was one of obligation, not relationship."[23] Through this compelling and riveting act of service, Jesus captured the affections of the disciples who would be the first generation of servant leaders in the church. The disciples were to be the catalyst for change in God's consummating his church.

Jesus next furthers the expectation of servant leadership in following him by stating, "A servant was not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:16). The meaning here is straightforward. Barrett explains, "The disciples are not to expect better treatment than their Lord, nor are they to think

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[19] Kruse, *John,* 280.

[20] Carson, *The Gospel of John,* 467.

[21] J. Ramsey Michaels, *John,* New International Bible Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 240.

[22] Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 14.

[23] Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 14.

themselves too important to perform the acts of service which he performed."[24] These proverbial sayings admit to a broader application of posture and position. The slave should never think himself more distinguished than his master, nor a pupil than his teacher. Servant leaders must keep in perspective their meekness of position and humility in posture. Jesus was a revolutionary servant pushing against the grain of culture. John wants his readers to understand Jesus as the archetype; a revolutionary servant pushing against the grain of society, and the disciples are to imitate their teacher.

Acts 6:1-7

The exegesis of this passage is not to prove whether the seven chosen men were deacons or the precursor to the later deacon ministry of the church, but rather a focus upon the priority and responsibility for these prototype deacons as servants. In this passage, Luke introduces an organizational crisis due to the increased number of disciples (Acts 5:14). This new group of servant leaders assembled by the apostles and the congregation is appointed to lead through the act of service, thus providing unity and care for the entirety of the local Christian community.

John Polhill places this incident in the early to mid-thirties, perhaps five years after Pentecost, which is ample time for the community to grow complex enough to incur barriers to their growth.[25] One growth inhibitor for the church was, as Luke describes, "complaints from the Hellenist arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution" (Acts 6:1). The complaining and murmuring against the apostles were not out of place; an unintended injustice had developed within the newly birthed church. The Grecian Jewish widows lacked insufficient support and

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[24] C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text,* 2nd ed. (London: SPCK Press, 1978), 444.

[25] John B. Polhill, *Acts,* The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Holman, 1992), 178.

provision, and this unintentional neglect and adversity created an opportunity for the young community to display its compassion, flexibility, and love for its people.

As Luke sets the scene, "in those days," the local congregation was composed of both Hellenist and Hebrew Christians (6:1). Speaking to the church's diversity, Bruce adds, "The Hellenist were Jews whose habitual language was Greek and who attended Greek-speaking synagogues; the Hebrews spoke Aramaic (or Mishnaic Hebrew) and attended Hebrew speaking synagogues."[26] Longenecker describes these "Hellenized Jewish Christians" or "Grecian Jewish believers" as Jews living in Jerusalem who had come from the Diaspora.[27] He explains that these widows were more Grecian than Hebraic in their worldview since their upbringing had not originated in Jerusalem. Marshall adds, "After the death of their husbands, many of these widows would have naturally returned to their homeland looking for charity and had since become disciples of Jesus during their time in the area."[28] Jews provided both a daily and weekly charity of food and money for nonresidents and transients in the community and sometimes delivered to the needy from house to house.[29] Consequently, the new Christian community of disciples was not wholly organized or prepared for the enormity of pastoral care, nor were they equipped to handle the cultural tension and prejudices related to the different worldviews and languages of its members.

A "complaint by Hellenist" to the twelve apostles brought attention to the concern of the widows lacking food provisions (1:1). Since the Hellenist members were the ones who drew attention to the injustice, it possibly was understood as a deliberate

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[26] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 120.

[27] Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 6 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, J. D. Douglas, and Richard P. Polcyn (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 125.

[28] I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 126.

[29] Polhill, *Acts,* 180.

and subversive act, thus causing division in the community. F. F. Bruce describes the problem as a "practical issue in that daily allocations were made to the poorer members of the community from the common fund and that it seemed that one group was being favored over another."[30] This injustice, though most likely unintentional, needed to be addressed by the leaders of the community for the sake of church unity.

The twelve apostles assumed responsibility for the injustice brought to them, and acted decisively, thus legitimizing the concern. Under the social tension, while in front of the full number of disciples, the apostles state their problem in the negative: "It is not right that we should give up preaching" (6:2). John Stott explains the deeper problem discovered by the apostles, in that the "social administration threatened to occupy all their time and to inhibit them from the work which Christ had specifically entrusted to them, namely preaching and teaching."[31] Understandably, church leaders must have a clear focus on the right priorities admonishing that the feeding of God's Word is just as valid to life as food.

With that in mind, the twelve summoned the community together to suggest their solution (6:2). The twelve declared "it would not be right" or pleasing to God if they left their mission for another. They were not to abandon the ministry of prayer and preaching of God's Word to handle serving tables. Spence Jones explains serving tables and the distinct offices:

> The English reader should remember that the "ministration" of ver. 1, the "serve" of this verse, and the "deacon" which was the name of the new officers, are all forms of the same Greek word (διακονία, διακονεῖν, διάκονος). In ver. 4 "the ministry of the word" is opposed to "the daily ministration" of meat. The passage gives a necessary warning to the ministers of God's word not to spend too much time and strength upon any secular work, even though it be a work of charity. They must give themselves to the word of God and to prayer. There are Christian laity to serve tables.[32]

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[30] Bruce, *The Book of the Acts,* 120.

[31] John Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World,* The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1990), 120.

[32] Spence Jones, *Acts of the Apostles* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), 192-93.

The apostles' devotion to the Word and prayer does not mean that the twelve should never involve themselves in charity work or that social work is inferior, but rather, they must be unequivocally devoted to their calling of preaching and prayer. However, desiring not to neglect the widows, the apostles proposed a clear solution. It is not to be missed by the modern church today that God distinctly calls to the local church different people, with different giftings, working in unity, so that the body of Christ is healthy and well-equipped for gospel ministry.

The Apostle's solution was to have the congregation appoint a new group of seven servant male leaders to engage the task. In Acts 6:5, "They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch" Cornelis van Dam reasons why the apostles chose precisely seven: "Why seven men were to be chosen is not specified, but most likely because for Jews this was a number of completeness."[33] Luke is not prescribing a definite number of deacons for every church; instead, the number seven met the unique needs of the church.

The congregation selected seven qualified men of outstanding character. They were of "good repute," which means they were of distinguished character (6:3), well-spoken of by the members of the congregation and community. They were "full of the Spirit," meaning there is noticeable spiritual evidence manifested in their lives. Being "full of wisdom" suggests that these men had the practical skill set needed to accomplish the task, the ability to make quality judgments, and were competent in administration. They were to be champions of the faith that would help drive the new Christian community forward through their servants' hearts and leadership. In contrast, the apostles serve the community as they stay the course praying and exhorting the community in the words of God (6:4).

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[33] Cornelis van Dam, *The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2016), 51.

Luke provides no details as to how the process of selection took place, but it is possible those who reported the neglect led the selection process; hence, this may be why all seven men were possibly Greek-speaking Jews.[34] Nevertheless, the twelve give their approval of the selected through the laying on of hands and prayer (6:6). Polhill reiterates,

> It is best not to read our current practices of ordination back into the text of Acts with regard to this gesture of hand-laying in that this gesture is used several ways in Acts. Often the present passage is seen to be the initiation of the diaconate, yet the word deacon (*diakonos*) never occurs in the passage. Moreover, in the rest of Acts, nothing is made of their administrative duties.[35]

This new group's commission was to lead out in service and charity, keeping the unity of faith (Eph 4:3). This group is to be viewed as a precursor to the later constituted deacon ministry. Merkle agrees and maintains that, even though the term "deacon" does not occur in the Acts 6 passage, it provides a helpful model of how godly servants can assist those who are called to preach the Word of God.[36] Apparently, these men were a hybrid between deacon and elder; nonetheless, they were commissioned to an official task with a responsibility to serve through charitable acts related to food and money distribution among the needy.[37] Their task was to bring organization and management to a situation that was causing frustration. They were responsible to the community for administration and charitable allocation of meals and money for the poor. In detail, the seven were to organize the collected goods for the needy, distribute money or goods to the needy, and

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[34] Ecknard Schnabel, *Acts,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 333.

[35] Polhill, *Acts,* 182.

[36] Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 66.

[37] Polhill, *Acts,* 180.

coordinate the church's overall charitable services (Acts 4:34-37, 5:2).[38] Alexander

Strauch calls The Seven, the church's official ministers of mercy.[39]

In summary, the community selected the candidates, and the apostles confirmed their appointment to serve. Seven servant leaders were appointed to a particular task for a particular time in that both Stephen and Philip would later transition into the service of evangelism through more of an elder-like role. Moreover, because of these servant leaders, the murmuring stopped, and the church significantly increased (Acts 6:7). Increase and church growth come from the deacons enabling the apostles (or future elders) to continue to preach, teach, pray, and equip God's people with God's Word. These prototype deacons were called by God through the congregation to lead. They displayed leadership through maintaining the unity of the diverse Christian community and service to the needy within the congregation; thus, they should be called ministers of mercy.

First Timothy 3:8-13

A brief exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:8 proves that deacons must be servant leaders. This section of Paul's writing is composed of two distinct sub-sections clarifying the required qualities of two distinct ecclesiastical positions: overseers and deacons.[40] Like that of the overseer, Paul introduces a separate office in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Though Scripture provides no defined selection process for the deacon office, Timothy was responsible for the appointment of these dignified servant leaders. To the Ephesian church, Paul seemingly necessitates that Christian character, above that of positional competency, be most important since the text provides very little of a clear job description. Therefore, similar to the overseer qualifications, Paul's stipulations for these

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[38] Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon: The Church's Minister of Mercy* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1992), 33.

[39] Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, 33.

[40] Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 472.

servant leaders were high. Paul's high standards for these strategic church positions are for the protection and provision of the body of Christ.

Dignified Deacons (1 Tim 3:8)

Paul listed four requirements for the deacon position. Beginning with the positive trait "worthy of respect" or "dignified" suggesting that deacons be seriously minded servants (1 Tim 3:8). Dignified (*semnos)* contains the idea of honorable, noble, and respectable (1 Tim 3:11).[41] Because the deacon position will be that of a community or public servant leader, the gospel ministry of the church within the pagan community is on display for all to witness. The reputation of Jesus' church matters; consequently, the pagan community must esteem these servant leaders. Paul envisioned an observable godly behavior with Christ as its inward source.[42]

Not Double Tongued (1 Tim 3:8)

Paul next explains the three prohibitive attitudes of the deacon. The first prohibition relates to the speech of the servant. The Pauline phrase "not double-tongued" refers primarily to controlling one's speech (1 Tim 3:8).[43] Information is not to be said twice, passed along, or gossiped about, thus leading to duplicitous speech. Doubled tongued people are two-faced, insincere, and thus they lack the credibility and trustworthiness of the office.[44] Philip Towner states, "A leader afflicted by this weakness would be a threat to the trust and stability of the community."[45] Thus, due to the public

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[41] Walter L. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 133.

[42] Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 262.

[43] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2, Timothy, Titus,* The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 116.

[44] Benjamin L. Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 234.

[45] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 263.

qualities of these servant leaders' positions, Scripture necessitates the deacon to be void of this shortcoming, serving as an example of following Jesus. A deacon must be truthful and trustworthy, as they demonstrate Christlikeness.

Not Addicted to Wine (1 Tim 3:8)

Paul's second prohibition forbids the love of "much wine" (1 Tim 3:8). Although the New Testament provides an allowance for the use of alcohol, the deacon is not to be "addicted" to wine (1 Tim 5:23). Alcohol must not firmly hold their attention or consistently occupy the mind of the deacon. Scripture is clear and contains many warnings against drunkenness, thus persistently drunken people fall short of being trustworthy and dignified (Pro 20:1, 23:30-35, Hosea 4:11). Furthermore, intoxication demonstrates a lack of self-control that could humiliate the servant leader, the Christian community, and Christ.[46] Scripture warns against these types of habitual behaviors as it is unbecoming of God's people. Like that of the elder, deacons are to be "above reproach" when it comes to their consumption of alcohol (1 Tim 3:2).

Not Greedy for Money (1 Tim 3:8)

The third prohibition prescribes restraint in a deacon's financial and material dealings. "Not greedy for dishonest gain" includes utilizing this spiritual office for financial gain (1 Tim 3:8).[47] In this text, Strauch believes Paul not only had false teachers in mind (1 Tim 6:5; Titus 1:11) but also wonders if Paul naturally had Judas Iscariot on his mind, for Judas illustrates what "fond of sordid gain" means.[48] The apostle John wrote that Judas was a "thief," stealing from the disciples' money box (John 12: 5-6). Numerous texts of Scripture warn of stealing, specifically robbing the church, as a severe problem.

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[46] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 263.

[47] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2, Timothy, Titus*, 116.

[48] Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, 98.

Because deacons often handle the financial administration of the local church, they could easily succumb to dishonest monetary gain. Thus, a prerequisite for this servant leadership position is that of honorable financial dealings. Candidates with poor financial dealings disqualify themselves from potentially serving in the diaconate.

Devoted Deacons (1 Tim 3:9)

First Timothy 3:9 stresses the importance that deacons must "hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience." The mystery here is the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah for both Jew and Gentile (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:3-6). Christ is the center of God's mystery (Col 1:26).[49] Deacons devote themselves to the certainty of the Christian faith. Having knowledge of the gospel, the deacons daily live out the gospel message (2 Cor 5:17). In light of false teachers, Paul explicitly commands that the deacon's behavior be consistent with his doctrinal beliefs.[50] Although deacons were not mandated to be teachers, like the elders, Paul requires deacons to be sound in the faith, knowing enough doctrine to contest the many false teachers in Ephesus and influencing Christians toward holiness.[51] As servant leaders, deacons must hold, with intense conviction, the Christian doctrines as they lead through word and deed.

Tested and Proven (1 Tim 3:10)

Paul now requires aspiring deacons "be tested" by being observed for a considerable amount of time.[52] The test here is not a one-time test, but an extended examination, "proving themselves blameless" having demonstrated themselves worthy in

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[49] Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 134.

[50] Merkle, *40 Questions*, 235.

[51] Merkle, *40 Questions*, 235.

[52] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2, Timothy, Titus,* 117-18.

their service as they would continue to do what they have begun.[53] "Blameless" corresponds to the godly character of the potential deacons being "above reproach" and free of accusations that would disqualify them from leadership.[54] The candidate must be "free of accusation," examined, and proven blameless. Deacons must meet high spiritual qualifications as servant leaders.

Faithful Women (1 Tim 3:11)

Paul next focuses his attention on addressing women servant leaders. After having listed five-character qualifications for the deacons and insisting on their public examination, utilizing the word "likewise," Paul now introduces a new class of deacons closely associated with the deacons.[55] However, because Paul utilized the word *gynaikas* in describing this group, which can mean either "women" or "wives," it is impossible to tell whether these were the wives assisting their husbands or women who serve as deacons.[56] At this point in history, the Greek language did not have a female form of the word *deacon*. For this reason, only the context can determine the true meaning of the text.[57] There are two contested interpretations. First, since this verse occurs within the instruction for deacons, it is argued that the behavior of their wives may be intended as part of their qualifications.[58] Second, others argue that Paul was making an allowance for women to hold the office of deacon. The view taken for this project is that in 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul was addressing female deacons.

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[53] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, vol. 35A (New York: Yale University Press, 2001), 228.

[54] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 265.

[55] Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon,* 112-13.

[56] Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 134.

[57] William D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 199.

[58] Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 134.

Reasons for affirming that women cannot be deacons. Supporting

arguments in favor of "wives" often point to the popular English translations (ESV, NET,

NEB, GNB, and KJV), which translates *gynaikas* as "their wives," thus settling the

argument.[59] However, the interpretation by the translators insert the word "their," which

is not found in the text. Thus, the Greek here does not contribute to a correct

interpretation. The preference of translators is convincing but suggestive.

The more persuasive argument for a "wives" interpretation is found in

questioning why Paul would abruptly interrupt his instructions from the male deacon to

the new female office of deaconess in 1 Timothy 3:11. Consequently, if the text were

referring to women deacons, it would disrupt the natural flow of thought lacking a clear

transition, making verses 12-13 seem as afterthoughts.[60] Additionally, if Paul were

attempting to establish the added office of deaconesses, he would have done so explicitly,

rather than incidentally.[61] Those who favor this line of thought think it not surprising that

Paul would be referencing the "wives" of deacons since these women would naturally be

involved in the life of their husbands' office.

Additional arguments include Paul's silence in not addressing the character of

the elders' wives is because the nature of the elders' work was different, primarily

teaching and prayer. For that reason, they believe wives are not mentioned among the

elders' requirements.[62] Also, as the office of deacon is to a degree authoritative in the

physical/logistical realm, this would be in clear violation of 1 Timothy 2:12, whereas

Paul states that women are not to exercise authority over men.[63] With the Acts 6

prototype diaconate in view, Alexander Strauch affirms a male diaconate, stating, "These

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[59] van Dam, *The Deacon*, 83.

[60] Merkle, *40 Questions,* 254.

[61] Merkle, *40 Questions,* 254.

[62] van Dam, *The Deacon*, 83.

[63] Merkle, *40 Questions,* 256.

women are not official deacons, but are assistants to the deacons, women who render auxiliary service, performing ministries for which women are better adapted."[64] Strauch, a leading commentator on the subject of church polity, endorses a "wives of deacons" interpretation because it avoids any conflict with Paul's earlier teaching on women not having authority over men (1 Tim 2: 12).[65] Furthermore, the argument that the "likewise" in 1 Timothy 3:11 is to be interpreted as Paul's introduction to a "new office" of deacons is to accept a narrow interpretation.[66] On these grounds, supporters of the rendering of "wives" conclude that Paul has in view the wives of married deacons rather than a separate office of deaconess.

Reasons for affirming women can be deacons. Arguments supporting the view that Paul was pointing to women (deaconesses), not necessarily deacons' wives, are in view here. First, just as in verse 8, the use of the word "likewise" (cf. 1 Tim 2:9, 3:8; Titus 2:3, 6) strongly suggests a third and distinct group of women deacons.[67] Second, the text is void of any possessive pronoun or definite article in connecting women with deacons. Thus, the rendering would be best interpreted as "women."[68] If wives were Paul's intention, then he did not give that indication. Third, Paul provided no qualifications for the wives of elders, who, like male deacons, would be involved in their husbands' service. Merkle argues, "Why would wives of deacons be given special consideration, as opposed to the more important position of the elders' wives. It does not seem likely that Paul would have stricter requirements for deacons than he does for elders." [69] Merkle

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[64] Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon,* 120.

[65] Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon,* 124.

[66] Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, 254.

[67] Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 493.

[68] Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 493.

[69] Merkle, *40 Questions,* 250.

clearly takes the position that Paul must have been addressing women deacons rather than the wives of deacons. Fourth, Paul did not use the feminine form of deacons' "deaconesses" because the Greek language provides no word.[70] The term "woman" was the only way Paul would be able to distinguish this distinct group from the male deacons. Fifth, in Romans 16:1-2, Paul commends Phoebe as a "deacon" (διάκονον) of the local church in Cenchreae.[71] Paul here uses the masculine form of *diakonos* to refer to a woman, thus strongly suggesting that by this time in history, the term became standardized in referring to the office of deacon.[72] Phoebe may be the first example of the "official" deacon since this seems to fit with the situation of the early church.[73] Additionally, the allowance of women to become deacons does not violate Paul's prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12 since a deacon is not mandated to "teach or exercise authority" over the church.[74] Reflecting upon these five arguments, one can conclude the interpretation of the term "women" in 1 Timothy 3:11 should be interpreted as "women" rather than "wives."

Furthermore, it was imperative that these ladies must "be respectable" and not "slanders" or "gossipers." This term for "slanderer" refers to the devilish behavior as in spreading lies from house to house with the intent to hurt someone's reputation.[75] Likewise, these ladies must be "sober-minded" and self-controlled, which compliments the prior statement of not being addicted to wine (1 Tim 3:8). Paul next writes his catchall phrase, "trustworthy in everything," indicating the necessity for the deaconess to

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[70] Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 493.

[71] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 768.

[71] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 266; Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 204.

[72] Merkle, *40 Questions,* 251.

[73] Jamin Hübner, *A Case for Female Deacons* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 23.

[74] Merkle, *40 Questions,* 250.

[75] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 266; Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 204.

be faithful in knowing and living out the gospel. These four qualifications are not suggestions but essential perquisites for the female servant leader.

Family Faithfulness (1 Tim 3:12)

Paul now reverts to the subject of male deacons. These male candidates for the diaconate must prove faithful in marriage to have inspired trust within the covenanted community that is the church.[76] The deacon is to be a one-woman man implying a faithful monogamous relationship. Though similar to the overseer requirement of having a well-managed household (1 Tim 3:4), the deacon's well-ordered family likely suggests that he has administrative skills for the position of a servant leader. Moreover, marriage is the foundation of the family and the church, and ultimately society. Marital purity and a well-managed home exemplify God's design and ultimately display God's character in the community. The concern for this management ability suggests that deacons carried out significant leadership duties in service to the church.[77]

Various interpretations have been suggested concerning the command to be a "one-women" man. Some believe Paul is mandating deacons to be married and not single. Some argue that Paul is prohibiting divorced or remarried deacons from serving, and view remarriage after the death of a spouse as disqualifying.[78] If divorce was in the picture here, then Paul could have stated it unmistakably by using the Greek word for divorce (*apolyō*).[79] If singleness were forbidden, then both Paul and Timothy would have been ineligible. Furthermore, this line of reasoning would be inconsistent with Paul's teaching that being single is a better state for church workers (1 Cor 17, 25-38).[80] In

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[76] Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy,* 229.

[77] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 267.

[78] Merkle, *40 Questions,* 124-28.

[79] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2, Timothy, Titus,* 110.

[80] Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 170-71.

summary, the most considerable explanation is that Paul is making a general and positive stipulation that a candidate must be faithful to one wife, confirming the ideal outlined in the New Testament that marriage is between a man and a woman designed for permanence.[81]

Rewards for Faithfulness (1 Tim 3:13)

Paul is concluding the deacon qualifications by describing two encouraging rewards for those "who have served well as deacons" (1 Tim 3:13). The first reward is that of "good standing" or influence. The term "good standing" here does not denote an advance in ecclesiastical rank or necessarily heavenly rewards but that of assurance of good reputation and respect from the church for a job well done (1 Thess 5:12-13).[82] Paul knew all too well the false prophets in the community whose influence shipwrecked the faith of many; thus, the deacons flourish in their positions, gaining a good reputation with the church, the community, and with God as they glorify God and the gospel flourishes.[83]

The second reward is that of "great confidence in the faith." Usage of this term often expresses boldness of speaking or proclamation and suggests general confidence in various situations.[84] However, while the boldness of speech may fit the task of deacons, "in Christ Jesus" suggests that Jesus Christ is the object of faith; thus, faithful service and genuine obedience bring a greater sense of confidence in God.[85] Deacons are to honor the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit as good, visible, and living examples of what it means to believe and obey Christ Jesus as servant leaders (Rom 8:29-30).

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[81] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996), 94.

[82] Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles,* 118-19.

[83] Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 205-6.

[84] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 268.

[85] Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 496-97.

In summary, the 1 Timothy 3:8-13 leadership codes provide the church with guidelines for qualifying, choosing, and testing deacons. Paul emphasizes the essentials of the deacon's character, stresses household management and marital fidelity, and consistently addresses having a godly reputation as crucial to gospel ministry. Moreover, Paul has in view a style of sacrificial leadership that benefits the whole group at considerable cost to the servant.[86]

Conclusion

Ministry and ministry effectiveness are primarily a reflection of its leadership. Therefore, without clear biblical order in the church supported by biblical rationale, the health and the growth of the church is put at risk. Particularly concerning the offices of elders and deacons, Scripture reveals its divine plan for church structure. Reflecting upon the passages of 1 Timothy 3: 8-13 and Acts 6:1-6, it can be concluded that order is necessary and godly character is imperative. The entirety of Christ's church is spiritually knitted together as a human body (Col 1:18). Thus, there is an inseparable link between the spiritual life of the church and the life of its leadership. Without godly and faithful leadership churches suffer deeply.

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[86] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 269.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR
DEVELOPING DEACONS AS SERVANT LEADERS

Over the years, the church has quietly smuggled into its leadership coffers techniques of leadership contrary to Scripture. With the Bible as the standard for all Southern Baptist faith and practice, a return to a biblical model of governance is greatly needed for many churches. In this chapter, five significant areas of knowledge development for a successful and healthy deacon ministry are identified and qualified through Scripture and prevalent writings. The first area examines necessary biblical foundations of church leadership and discusses the importance of clarifying the deacon's leadership role. The next section provides a brief overview of existing servant leadership theories in culture. Next, a brief survey and evolution of Southern Baptist deacon practices are examined and discussed, including an overview of key authors' different perspectives of the responsibilities of the diaconate. The next section focuses on the five best practices of the deacon as a servant leader, as well as three traps to avoid in servant leadership. The final section explores servant leadership development and practices vital for the deacon's development into a servant leader.

The Church and Leadership: Biblical Foundations

Leadership is vital for any organization to succeed. God's church is no different, because without leadership, God's people are like sheep without shepherds.

Church of the New Covenant

Though the term *church* may be familiar to many, its nature, purpose, and characteristics are often a misunderstood topic. Often, *church* is used for a structure or to describe a building. Other times, the term is used to define a specific group of Christ-

followers. It is impossible for this section to do justice to the complexity of the topic and to consider adequately all the various aspects related to the *church*. However, a brief examination of key biblical passages and terms addressing the church are considered.

The most common New Testament Greek word that is translated "church" is ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*).[1] *Ekklēsia* is derived from the preposition *ek*, meaning "out of or out from," and verb *kaleo*, which means "to call"; hence, the church is "a called-out group.[2] Consequently, the study of the church is called "ecclesiology." Mark Dever describes the church as not a place, but a people, and more specifically "the new covenant, blood-bought people of God."[3] Beginning with its origin, Christ himself established and founded his people (Eph 5:25). Christians are called out by God for God, as Paul writes, "God is rich in mercy and great in love, even though we were dead in sin, he made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:1-9). Therefore, in Christ, the church will live and move and have its being (Acts 17:28). Because Christ created the church, he is the head of all the things for the church. Furthermore, Scripture teaches that Christ builds and adds to his church (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:16, 18; Matt 16:18; Acts 2:47).

Concerning the composition of the church, Erickson writes, "The church is composed of all His true disciples."[4] *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* reads, "A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel."[5] Paul Enns explains, "While the local church views the church as a group of believers in a particular locality, the universal church views "all those who, in this age, have been born of the Spirit of

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[1] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 953.

[2] Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 359.

[3] Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 34.

[4] Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, "Abstract of Principles," accessed April 1, 2020, https://www.sbts.edu/about/abstract/.

[5] Southern Baptist Convention, "Southern Baptist Faith and Message 2000," accessed April 1, 2020, http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp/.

God and have by that same Spirit been baptized into the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13, 1 Pet 1:3, 22-25)."[6]

Perhaps the most vivid image of the church is that of the body of Christ with Christ as its head (Eph 1:22-23; 1 Cor 12:13, 27; Col 1:18). O'Brien explains the metaphor: "The body terminology and its constituent parts refer to the mutual relations and obligations of church members with the head is shown to be 'the cohesive and enabling factor for the body (Rom. 12:4–5; 1 Cor. 12:12–27)."[7] The people of God are an intricate tapestry made of people from differing races, ethnicities, or backgrounds, spiritually interconnected by Christ. Dependence is displayed in that each believer is connected to Christ with respect to being connected to each other (Eph 4:15-16). In effect, as an expression of Christ's living body, the local church is to fulfill Christ's Great Commission (Matt 28:18). The local congregation is to identify and call out for itself qualified elders and deacons so that these leaders can minister to the believers and to the world.

**Clarifying Structure: A Plurality
of Elders Lead the Church**

Shared leadership is not a new concept. Within God's design for the local church, he installs a plurality of leadership. Israel shared leadership through elders, Jesus chose a plurality of apostles, and the apostles chose seven men to serve the widows (Exod 18; Luke 5:4-11; Acts 6:3-6). Scripture reveals that pastoral oversight of many of the first churches was committed to a plurality of elders collectively pastoring.[8] Except in the

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[6] Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 360.

[7] Peter. T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 148.

[8] Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership,* rev. ed (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 36.

context of addressing a singular elder, the New Testament always refers to the term "elder" as a plurality.[9]

The convincing pattern in the New Testament is that every church had a plurality of elders or bishops. Describing the same office, the term *bishop* is used interchangeably. In the book of Acts, Luke writes to the "elders" at the church of Antioch (11:30). During his first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas appointed a council of "elders" for each new church (Acts 14:23). The "elders" of the church of Jerusalem were ready to work through a doctrinal issue (Acts 15:2). Paul sent word to the "elders" of the church of Ephesus to come for a meeting (Acts 20:17, 28). Paul's letter to the church at Philippi is addressed to the "elders" (Phil 1:1). James instructs sick believers to call for the "elders" to pray (Jas 5:14). Paul writes to the "elders" at the church of Ephesus and instructs Titus to appoint "elders" in every local church (1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5). Lastly, Peter exhorts the "elders" to "shepherd the flock of God" (1 Pet 5:1). Though Scripture does not specify a specific number of elders per congregation, Scripture consistently shows a pattern of plurality. George Knight agrees, arguing that analyses of the data indicates the existence of oversight by a "plurality of church leaders" throughout the New Testament church by every New Testament writer who writes about church leadership.[10] Conclusively, the New Testament explicitly displays a collective pastoral leadership for the local church as biblically sound.

Contrary to the shared leadership model described by Scripture is the mono-pastorate or unitary leader. More traditional than biblical, the evidence in the New Testament of a single elder model of leadership is lacking. Few texts seem to suggest a single elder polity but are unconvincing (1 Tim 3:2; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1; Rev 2–3).

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[9] Benjamin L. Merkle, *Why Elders? A Biblical and Practical Guide for Church Members* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 30-31.

[10] George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 175-77.

Conclusions should not be made on church governance based on these texts.[11] In fact, the biblical, historical, and pragmatic arguments for a plurality of elders within a local congregation are sound.

Concerning the practical ministry of the single elder, Danny Akin candidly explains the common ecclesiastical practice of many Southern Baptist churches: "A somewhat paranoid autocrat as pastor, monthly business meetings dedicated to senseless issues that only eat up time, a committee structure that looks like the Department of Education and is about as efficient, and a deacon board that functions like a carnal corporate board."[12] While Akin clearly does not support a single elder polity, his statements ring true about practical ministry within Southern Baptist churches. Not only is the single-elder model of church government not the New Testament pattern, but also pragmatically, it deprives the church from adequate care, denies the elder from the support he needs, gives excessive and burdensome responsibility to one man, and robs the men in the congregation from "aspiring" toward eldership (1 Tim 3:1). Furthermore, a plurality of elders equally sharing the position and responsibility to the office provides the foundational structure needed for the church to flourish and for a properly functioning diaconate.

Clarifying Roles: Deacons Are Not Elders

An individual church's polity can be confusing, especially if that church has multiple layers of staffing, ministers, pastors, secretaries, and church offices such as treasurers and clerks. Having observed this confusion in the local church, Benjamin L. Merkle concludes his book on *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* with a chapter exclusively on the importance of terminology. Merkle notes,

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[11] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 175-77.

[12] Daniel Akin, "The Single-Elder-Led Church: The Bible's Witness to a Congregational/ Single-Elder-Led Polity," in *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity,* ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B & H, 2004), 25.

The particular title used to describe a church leader is not the central issue. The more important issue is the role the person is fulfilling. The apostle Paul sometimes uses titles to describe particular church leaders. It should be noted, however, that Paul is more interested in service than he is with any office (Gal 6:6; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Cor 16:15-16; Col 1:7; 4:12,17). Although at times, Paul more specifically speaks of office (Eph 4:11; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-2, 8, 12, 5:12; Titus 1:5, 7), his main concern is that the gospel is advanced. Titles are not essential to the Christian ministry; however, it does not mean that they have no importance or relevance. For example, the office of deacon is consistently found in many churches, although the duties of deacons vary widely. In many churches, the deacons function like elders in the sense that they are involved in leading and shepherding the church. In other circumstances, the deacons do not really serve but are simply elected or chosen to make important decisions. In some denominations, a deacon is an entry-level ministerial position that is the first step up the ecclesiastical ladder.[13]

Defining terms, titles, and roles are vital to church health. Merkle reveals two reasons why a church should use the correct terminology when explaining specific functions and titles for its leadership. First, Merkle maintains, "By using biblical terminology, as well as performing biblical roles, the leaders communicate to the congregation that the Bible is the final authority for all faith and practice."[14] Christians must utilize terminology from God's Word as a practical implication of their belief system.

Second, Merkle asserts, "The reason it is best to use the titles for leaders given in Scripture is that it allows the congregation to know what to expect from the leadership."[15] Clarity is important because often questioned within the church body is "who is in charge of what?" Accordingly, when the church functions within the biblical framework of Scripture, the church will know emphatically that the elders are in charge of preaching and teaching, and the deacons are to provide service to the church and community.

Reflecting upon this same topic of the complexity of titles and functions within the church, Wayne Grudem in his book *Systematic Theology* agrees with Merkle, stating,

It is important not to allow other offices in the church overshadow the importance of the offices specifically named in Scripture, and that they do not have any authority

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[13] Benjamin L. Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 259-60.

[14] Merkle, *40 Questions*, 261.

[15] Merkle, *40 Questions*, 261.

that is not subject to the governing authority of those offices clearly named in Scripture, then it is much less likely that people in the congregation or the officeholders themselves will look to Scripture and find detailed descriptions of how they should act or how they should be chosen. This would tend to diminish the effective authority of Scripture to govern the church in the area of church leadership.[16]

When the Christian assembly as a whole learns to ground their conclusions on careful examination of Scripture, a culture of sufficiency upon Scripture is created. As a result, the church begins to rely upon God's Word as the final authority for all things church.

Furthermore, the apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians specifically addresses the assembly as a whole while explicitly addressing the offices of elders (overseer) and deacons. Paul writes, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons" (Phil 1:1). Peter O' Brien observes Paul's intentions: "Here, however, he has in view particular members of the congregation who are specifically described and known by these two titles; otherwise, the additions seem to be meaningless."[17] Three groups are described in the Philippian church: elders, deacons, and the congregation. Again, like that of 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Paul's reference to these two separate and distinct offices is the normative framework. Elders lead and maintain the ministry of the Word, while the deacons are concerned with service-oriented affairs of the assembly.

Deacons as Vital Leaders

It can often be assumed that elders do the real spiritual work—the hard work of ministry—while deacons do the menial task; however, this is far from the truth. Laboring together with elders, these two offices ensure that the needs of the church family are spiritually and materially met. Deacons maintain unity, provide for those in need, serve in the nursery, man the punch bowl, and assist as needed. As an integral part of a human

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[16] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 920.

[17] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 48.

system (a body of believers), deacons not only provide support but are to provide spiritual encouragement (1 Cor 12:27). Elders must assume responsibility in equipping deacons with the skills and encouragement needed for the task (Eph 4:12). Without this vital ministry of mercy, the body is incomplete.

How tragic it is when the church does not heed the opportunity to serve Christ by responding in obedience to Scripture to equip its deacons for the ministry. Within the context of 1 Timothy 3, the church at Ephesus required high caliber leadership. Paul warns both Titus and Timothy of the need to refute false teachers and correct ungodly behavior within the church (1 Tim 5:11-16). The unity of the church is at stake, and like that of Acts 6:1-7, when conflict was high and unity challenged, leadership took action. With this in mind, Paul provided the church at Ephesus with critical and specific instructions regarding the office of deacons. Faithful deacons were unifiers, ministers of mercy, examples of Christ to the flock, and so much more.

Though often undervalued and misunderstood, the diaconal ministry was given to the church and community to ensure that God's redemptive purposes would be promoted on earth. Not only does the Christian assembly enjoy the service of mercy for themselves, but the deacons' ministry of mercy is to be compounded into the community. In effect, Jesus and his church, his people, become light to the dark world in which they reside, and the deacons are at the forefront of that ministry (Matt 5:14).

**Ramifications of Poor Deacon
Selection Practices**

Unhealthy church culture is ultimately a theological problem.[18] Southern Baptists view the Bible as the sole written authority for their faith and practice, but it is often assumed that the congregation is scripturally mature. With that said, annual deacon nominations are often filled with the most popular rather than the most biblically qualified

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[18] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 102.

candidates. Additionally, some churches find themselves in the position of needing to simply fill a position on the diaconate due to the demands of their church structure. It is also worth noting that some members nominate others, hoping that providing them with a title will motivate them to serve more faithfully. Nonetheless, while the congregation may be responsible for determining the candidate based upon the 1 Timothy 3:8-13 qualifications, many members may not have the capacity to understand the apostle Paul's high regard for these qualified servant leaders.

Accordingly, whether candidates are nominated due to their popularity or a result of a lazy vote from a member, proper screening must take place. By utilizing a questionnaire and candidate interviews, nominees can be appropriately assessed. Without a proper assessment, the deacon, the diaconate, and the church could be compromised. Unqualified deacons invite numerous problems: the congregation could lose admiration for the deacon, the church's witness to the community could be jeopardized, and, ultimately, God would not be glorified. Therefore, appropriate screening practices of deacon nominees safeguard the church and its witness to the community.

Servant Leadership Theory: A Brief Overview

Robert Greenleaf first coined the principle of servant leadership in a 1970 essay titled "The Servant Leader."[19] Launching new research in the field, Greenleaf defined the leadership concept as "the servant-leader is servant first."[20] Through his own observation and experience, Greenleaf perceived traditional business leadership as authoritarian practices were becoming ineffective in the modern time, calling it the age of the "anti-leader."[21] Traditional business practices generally viewed people as objects to be controlled

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[19] Larry C. Spears, "Tracing the Growing Impact of Servant-Leadership," in *Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit, and Servant Leadership,* ed. Larry C. Spears (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 2.

[20] Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 21-22.

[21] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 16-18.

(powerless), while servant leadership focuses on helping (empowering) others to become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants.[22] Greenleaf explains the motivation behind the principle: "Servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."[23] Paradoxical to the hierarchical pattern of leadership, servant leadership prioritizes other's interest over self-interest. As the idea of servant leadership has expanded over the decades, many researchers have joined Greenleaf in the exploration of this seemingly new leadership practice.

However, the principle of servant leaders is nothing new. Jesus Christ is the best example of practicing what Greenleaf calls servant leadership. Ken Blanchard explains,

> Jesus, the only religious leader to build a management team, was continually asked questions like, "How do I become first?" or "Who is the greatest?" His responses were consistent "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35). "Whoever is the least among you all—he is the greatest" (Luke 9:48). When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, he was symbolically telling them about servant leadership (John 13:13-17). Jesus wanted his disciples to get this important message. Once the vision, and how people could be "saved," it was clear he wanted his disciples to go out and support, encourage, coach, and facilitate other people.[24]

Jesus was the original servant leader. He lived out the servant leadership paradigm in both word and deed. It is undeniable that from his servant leadership began the most significant movement in history, the Christian church. Like that of the great Christian movement of the first century, Stephen Covey agrees, "By engaging the entire team or organization in a process that creates a shared vision, which inspires each person to stretch and reach deeper into himself or herself, and to use everyone's unique talents . . . to independently and

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[22] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 143.

[23] Robert C. Greenleaf, "Essentials in Servant-Leadership," in *Focus on Leadership: Servant Leadership for the Twenty-First Century,* ed. Larry C. Spears and Michele Lawrence (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 23.

[24] Ken Blanchard, "Servant-Leadership Revisited," in Spears, *Insights on Leadership,* 27.

interdependently achieve that shared vision."[25] Jesus created a community that did precisely that—his disciples were equipped to serve, given the vision, given a specific mission, were entrusted with that mission, and ultimately fulfilled their mission.

Accordingly, leaders must concentrate their leadership on shifting from process and outcome to people and the future.[26] Paul T. P. Wong and Dean Davey have discovered five best practices of servant leadership: humility and selflessness, serving and developing others, consulting and involving others, inspiring and influencing others, and modeling integrity and authenticity.[27] Servant leaders are also free to utilize all positive aspects of all leadership models except command-and-control dictatorship.[28]

However, servant leadership is not without its critics. Some believe servant leadership is for idealists—those who are naïve and unrealistic.[29] Loss of control and absolute power in traditional practices may be construed as weak or ineffective. Nevertheless, servant leadership surpasses ordinary leadership constructs. Traditional constructs utilize fear, pride, and self-preservation as motivators rather than trust and integrity. Blanchard, Hodges, and Hendry agree, stating, "People with hearts motivated by self-interest put their own agendas, safety, statuses, and gratifications ahead of others."[30] Ego-driven leaders, often addicted to their pride, seek personal glory. In comparison, servant leadership modeled by Christ looks to the glory and betterment of

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[25] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership,* 3.

[26] Paul T. P. Wong and Dean Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," *Servant Leadership Round Table,* July 2007, http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/sl_proceedings/2007/wong-davey.pdf, 1

[27] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 6.

[28] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 3.

[29] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 4.

[30] Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus Revisited: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2016), 50.

others (1 Pet 5:2-3). Churches and the business community alike can benefit significantly from implementing servant leadership as best practice.

History of Southern Baptist Deacon Practices: An Overview

The past teaches about the present. Comprehending current trends and practices in leadership within Southern Baptist churches today necessitates a knowledge of the past. Specifically, studying the perspectives of the major influencers and their contributions to Southern Baptist deacon ministry provides a situational awareness for what has happen to deacon ministry in Southern Baptist Churches. In this chapter, the trends in deacon practices within the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are briefly reviewed. This section will show that unbiblical trends (management and business practices) within SBC deacon ministries were influenced by key contributors; however, in time, corrections were made and many influencers pressed the diaconate toward a biblical service oriented model of ministry.

1851. One of the most influential writings on the diaconate in the early years of the Southern Baptist Convention was that of R. B. C. Howell. In 1851, Howell, an influential pastor and second president of the Southern Baptist Convention, advocated strongly from Acts 6:1-7 that deacons were to maintain the "temporal" affairs of the church while the pastors (elders) maintain the spiritual affairs.[31] Howell identified a clear distinction, or dichotomy, between secular and spiritual matters within the church while explicitly describing the deacons as a "board of directors" that have charge of "all" the secular affairs in the kingdom of Christ.[32] Church business matters had become the primary

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[31] R. B. C. Howell, *The Deaconship* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 22.

[32] Howell, *The Deaconship*, 18.

and essential concern of the diaconate.[33] Many writers of the time took the same position as Howell in assigning all administrative functions to the deacons; thus, the "board of deacons" was born.[34]

1867. A second influential voice on the practices of the diaconate was that of J. M. Pendleton. In 1867, Pendleton, known for his writings on Landmarkism, published the popular and widely circulated *Baptist Church Manual.* Advocating for a dichotomy between pastor's and deacon's duties, Pendleton wrote, "The creation of the office of deacons recognizes the fact that the duties of the pastors are preeminently spiritual; and that they should not be burdened with the secular interests of the churches."[35] Different from Howell, Pendleton argues that the deacon's duties are not "exclusively secular," but their service should always be performed in a "spiritual frame of mind."[36] Deacons were to be more of spiritual servants prepared to serve in a shepherding capacity.[37] By the end of the nineteenth century, the role of the deacon trended drastically toward a business manager rather than a servant leader.

1929. Essentially reinforcing Howell's view, in 1929, P. E. Burrough's influential book, *Honoring the Deaconship,* followed the trend of ruling deacons, stating, "The business of the church and its finances constitutes the special and distinct assignment of the deacons."[38] Burroughs agreed with Howell in viewing the diaconate as an executive

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[33] Charles W. Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1979), 47.

[34] Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons*, 47.

[35] J. M. Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), 31.

[36] Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual*, 33

[37] Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual*, 34.

[38] P. E. Burroughs, *Honoring the Deaconship* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929), 69.

board; however, Burroughs did not believe that the deacons should rule or hold extreme amounts of authority, but that they should simply be managers.[39]

1955. By the 1950s, Robert Naylor sounded the alarm with his book *The Baptist Deacon*. Naylor recognized and identified the problem of the "executive board" of deacons serving as managers rather than ministers.[40] Arguing for a ministry of service-oriented diaconate, Naylor desired to transition the diaconate away from management. Accordingly, Southern Baptists as a whole responded and began the trend toward a service-oriented diaconate.[41]

1968. By 1968, continuing the trend, Howard B. Foshee argued harshly against the traditional diaconate model of his day. He explains the results from the popularized "deacon board" concept by writing, "Deacons as a board of directors and board of trustees were part of the daily conversation as the deacons assumed much of the management of the church property and finances in the late 1800s."[42] As a board of directors, all matters of the church were screened by deacons, and worst of all, the pastor and staff were now subordinate to the board.[43] Understanding the board as an unbiblical practice, Foshee strongly argues against a "business-world concept of a board of directors in the church," stating, "The authority of the deacons is one of Christian influence rather than authority

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[39] Howard B. Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1968), 35.

[40] Robert Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), 2-3.

[41] Bill Stancil, "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends in Deacon Life," in *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service* (Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, 1990), 22.

[42] Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 32-33.

[43] Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 33.

as a board of directors."[44] In other words, Foshee argued that deacons were to lead through example and impact rather than exercise authority and control.

As a reformer, Foshee challenged the traditional diaconal design and redefined deacon responsibilities as service-oriented ministers."[45] As a result of Foshee's work, the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention initiated the Deacon Family Ministry Plan.[46] Over the years, many Southern Baptist churches adopted the plan and deacons began the trend toward the spiritual task of performing "priestly" functions of care for persons in need.[47] Foshee significantly influenced Southern Baptist ecclesiology by redeeming the diaconate from the grasp of secular management strategies.

During his research on the role of the deacons through 160 years of Southern Baptist history, Francis Trascritti discovered five standard practices prescribed by various authors (see table 1).[48] Five commonalities are identified and ranked: (1) caregiving, (2) leadership, (3) ordinances, (4) witness, and (5) spirituality.[49] Evident throughout the history of literature on the deaconate, Trascritti concludes, there is an agreement in that the concepts of servanthood rightly belong to the deacon ministry.[50]

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[44] Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 33.

[45] Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 40.

[46] Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons,* 56.

[47] John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 197; Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 37.

[48] Table 1 is from Francis Gerard Trascritti, "The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Team Effectiveness of Deacon Ministries in Southern Baptist Churches" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 39.

[49] Trascritti, "The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Team Effectiveness," 39.

[50] Trascritti, "The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Team Effectiveness," 39-40.

Table 1. Trascritti's commonalties for the role of deacon

Howell (1851)	Burroughs (1925)	Egerton (1953)	Foshee (1968)	Deweese (1979)	Agar (1984)
Caregiving	Caregiving	Caregiving	Care giving	Caregiving	Caregiving
Leadership	Leadership	Leadership	Leadership	Leadership	
Ordinances	Ordinances	Ordinances	Ordinances	Ordinances	Ordinances
Managers		Managers			
	Finances	Finances			
	Property	Property			
		Witness	Witness		Witness
		Teaching			
			Spirituality	Spirituality	Spirituality
				Communi-cation	
				Cooperation	
				Preparation	
					Discipline

1979-2001. By the end of the twentieth century, Charles Deweese, Frederick Agar, Henry Webb, and Robert Sheffield continued to drive the momentum of Southern Baptist deacon life toward servant ministry.[51] Not only did these men challenge tradition, but they also followed the biblical pattern of deacon described in the book of Acts. With clarification of their role and responsibilities, deacons were now free to lead and influence the congregation and community through their Christlike service. John Hammett states that the best way to clarify the role and responsibility between the elder and deacon offices "is the establishment of a plural eldership which forces churches to think through the relationship of the two offices resulting in a renewal of the servant aspect of diaconal ministry, with leadership left to the elders."[52] Clarification of the elder and deacon roles provides better function, performance, and the health, while lessening stress and confusion.

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[51] Hanley Liu, "Training Deacon Candidates for Ministry at First Chinese Baptist Church of Walnut, California" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 46.

[52] Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 197.

Profile and Practices of Servant Leader

Among all the material produced about servant leadership, Tom Marshall asks a practical and clarifying question: "What does it all mean?"[53] Answering the question, Paul Wong and Dean Davey's research has produced a Servant Leadership Profile. Their collected data from over four years suggest five essential aspects. [54] These five characteristics provide a useful conceptual framework for servant leadership practice and leadership training.[55] For this project, the five titles of each concept have been modified but are by nature the same. These five best practices should be considered when seeking to multiply and deploy servant leaders.

Identity. Scripture designates that every follower of Christ confess that "Jesus is Lord" (Phil 2:11). Accordingly, reflecting upon the servant nature of Christ, Marshall states, "Our access to the life of Christ comes through the new birth, the work of regeneration . . . living by the power of that life comes through the work of sanctification."[56] Scripture makes clear that Christians who are internally "given a new heart" are to be "transformed" through the renewing of their mind in God's Word (Ezek 36:26; Rom 12:2). As Christians increase in understanding and appreciation of their redemption through the gospel, worldview is clarified, identity actualized, and allegiances solidified. Therefore, humility and selflessness are cultivated in the heart and minds of the servant leader.

For deacons, the primary qualification for servant leadership is that they are living demonstrations of the reality of all they believe. Accordingly, Christians are followers of their servant King as stated in Matthew: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the

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[53] Tom Marshall, *Understanding Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 77.

[54] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 5.

[55] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 6.

[56] Marshall, *Understanding Leadership,* 79.

servant like his master" (10:24-25). Jesus' expectation is that of complete allegiance and loyalty to himself and his mission.

However, sometimes terminology about following Christ and union with Christ has become a false dichotomy. As Scripture explicitly teaches, those who belong to Christ are fully in union with their master. The apostle Paul wrote to Christians that "your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Rankin Wilbourne states in his thoughtful book *Union with Christ*, "Union with Christ displaces us from the center of our own lives. It tells us we can discover who God created us to be only through living in vital union with his Son. It tells us the work of Christ for us cannot be separated from the person of Christ in us."[57] Christ is the Christian's identity.

Wong and Davey contend that a servant leader's "self-perception" is critical.[58] Assuming the nature of a servant is actualized through the process of self-emptying. In self-emptying, the concept becomes a reality.[59] Finally, a deacon servant leader's identity must be built on the primary foundation that their life is in Christ. In embracing this truth, the servant leader's identity is being expressed as a new identity in Christ.

Motivations. By extension of a new identity in Christ, the deacon is to embody the habitual, sacrificial attitude of Christ. Consequently, servant leaders seek to reproduce themselves intentionally and invest in others. With Christ as the model of imitation, Christ displayed devotion to his Father's will, which was a devotion to serve and suffer for others. Accountable to Christ himself, Christians reaffirm their allegiance to Christ in their becoming a servant or slave to Christ (John 13:16; 2 Cor 4:5). With the New Testament metaphor of "slave of Christ" in mind, Murray Harris argues, "To be '*in* Christ' is to live exclusively '*for* Christ,' that is, to live at his disposal and for his benefit. Apart from his

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[57] Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2016), 72.

[58] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 7.

[59] Marshall, *Understanding Leadership,* 82.

choice in the matter, a slave is obligated to fulfill an alien will, to obey and please his master."[60] Therefore, the term *slave* in the New Testament epitomizes the Christian's unquestionable devotion to Christ, to his people, and the community.[61] Christ becomes the motivation for caring for and serving others (Matt 22:36-39).

Effective deacon servant leaders lead by encouraging, motivating, and serving others. Jesus' commitment to meeting the needs of others is to be imitated by his followers. Because empowerment is critical, servant leaders practice bringing out the best of others while resisting self-serving interest.[62] As a servant leader "seeks first the kingdom of God," motivations and practices align with Christ's Great Commission to make disciples and serving people becomes a priority (Matt 6:33).

Relational. Rightfully motivated servant leaders must relate to others well. Followers need a leader to listen to them, consult and involve them in decision making, and express confidence in them and their opinions.[63] Because a leader is always aiming for the best interest of those they lead, listening is paramount. Servant leaders should humbly and purposefully develop their interpersonal skills. Listening and speaking skills, conflict management, and team dynamics should all be a part of the overall growth and development of the servant leader.

For example, in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul's pastoral leadership manual for the church, the apostle clearly instructs Timothy, Titus, and the churches to maintain unity. Paul instructs the young pastors to develop other leaders by "entrusting" the teachings to faithful men, "appointing" elders to lead in every town, and qualifying elders and deacons for the ministry (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5; 1 Tim 3:1-13). In a practical sense, Timothy and

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[60] Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 95-99.

[61] Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 105-6.

[62] Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 7-8.

[63] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 8.

Titus utilize team-building principles to bring unity, stability, and growth to the churches. Collaboration through participation is implied.

Many passages in the book of Acts describe a collaboration of leadership as the apostles and elders of the churches gathered together before making decisions. In Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council met to discuss doctrinal issues. In Acts 21, Paul met with James and the elders to discuss gospel matters. A master team builder himself, Paul visited and founded numerous Christians communities, instructing them to keep the unity of the faith (Eph 4:1-6; Rom 15:5-6; 1 Cor 1:10). Furthermore, Jesus, in Matthew 18, commands the church to collaborate in the serious matter of church discipline, thus implying the necessity to gain consensus for decision making. Consequently, learning the important interpersonal skills of listening, problem-solving, and team building is an essential method for servant leaders. Listening well enables the leader to know what he or she ought to do and helps the deacon be a stabilizer and unifier within the church body. In caring for their people in this way, servant leaders display respect for those they lead and become a source of harmony within the church.

Inspirational. Servant leaders challenge others to live for a higher purpose and to strive for excellence.[64] These leaders not only know their mission but are committed to achieving it while bringing others along by encouraging the body in their self-development. For example, in Acts 1:8 Jesus directed the disciple's attention past their fear toward the immediate need of continuing the worldwide mission of Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were to be witnesses of Jesus to all the nations. For example, Jesus inspired the twelve, with a focus on the three (Peter, John, and James) to continue his mission. As a key leader, Peter continued to implement Jesus' strategy through inspiring Barnabas and Paul, who later inspired Timothy and Titus for Christian service.[65]

[64] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 8.

[65] Harry L. Reeder and Rod Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic: A Biblical Model for Raising Effective Leaders* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 36-37.

Moreover, Jesus' challenge to the twelve was also a challenge for all his disciples to maintain the mission of inspiration to one another.

Leaders need to be masters of inspiration. Unlike administrative managers, leaders constantly challenge others to look at the long-term vision. Servant leaders help others to maintain focus and not to be fascinated with short term successes. Careful not to become master manipulators or micro-managers, servant leaders appeal to a higher ideal. Servant leaders inspire with and through Christ. In John 15:5, Jesus says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." For practical implication, Christ is Christian inspiration. Christians not only find their identity in Christ but also their mission and purpose. With resolve, servant leaders inspire others to achieve a higher mission together effectively.

Character. A servant leader's character displays integrity, conviction, courage, and authenticity.[66] A leader's private and public life matters. Additionally, these resolved leaders are willing to make hard decisions based on their Christian convictions. Therefore, servant leaders know what they believe and in whom they believe (2 Tim 2:15). In holding "great confidence in the faith," servant leaders become a product of their biblical convictions (1 Tim 3:13). Having a firm vision, in-depth knowledge of God's Word, and a clear conscious, these leaders forge forward with unwavering resolve, willing to make the hard and difficult decisions while taking into consideration the high cost in leadership.

Furthermore, Wong and Davey discovered "authenticity" in leadership to be a key characteristic.[67] A response to unethical approaches that lacked integrity in organizational leadership, authenticity attempts to create a balanced approach in leadership. Contrary to authoritarian, controlling, self-preservation type leadership, authentic leaders utilize self-examination, show humility, invite collaboration, and are transparent in their dealings. Notably, Christian leaders are called by Scripture to be transparent in all their

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[66] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 8.

[67] Wong and Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership," 8.

transactions, displaying humility, and must consistently examine themselves (2 Cor 13:5; Lam 3:40). Servant leaders are accountable to others and should invite criticism for the sake of personal growth as they lead with honest resolve.

In conclusion, although the five best practices presented are beneficial, they not a pragmatic key to successful ministry. Servant leaders must be careful. Arthur Boers warns "that if the church relies too much on techniques and best practices, we may forego reliance on God; we act like atheists, and effectively deny God's existence and efficacy."[68] Church leaders should be weary in taking on the wrong values of leadership and steering the church off course. Simply put, the soundest practice for ministry is that of modeling Christ Jesus of Nazareth.

**Three Traps to Avoid in
Servant Leadership**

Traditionalism. Fearing failure, avoiding risk, fear of the unknown, and self-preservation often result in a reaction by the church community leading to traditionalism. Whereas "traditions" in general can be useful and healthy, "traditionalism" can be described as a toxic attitude. Traditionalism, as an approach to Christian ministry, is inflexible, resistant to change, and often reactionary. Often motivated by fear, traditionalism seeks to preserve the past rather than preparing for the future. Harry Reeder describes the church's traditionalism movement as reactionary:

> The reactionary trend of making the local church a religious museum of past achievements is equally unbiblical and ineffective. The church is not a monument of the past or a museum of religious nostalgia but a Body, a living organism, and must be kept as so (Eph 4:4). Additionally, this organism has a head, a chief shepherd in Christ Jesus, who is its head (Col 1:18).[69]

Moreover, churches that turn toward traditionalism often retreat within their walls forsaking their global mission of pushing against societal norms. Accordingly, Jesus'

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[68] Arthur Boers, *Servant and Fools: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 9.

[69] Reeder and Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic*, 29.

command to his apostles, and by extension the church, was to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19-20). Servant leaders should keep in mind that the church is not a human institution or idea, but by nature and design a moving instrument of proclamation and mission.

Ed Stetzer reflects upon the traps of traditionalism and pragmatic approaches to ministry, explaining that churches often do "what they know works," stating, "When churches fall into such a trap, it creates a self-affirming value system that upholds their particular methodology and sub-culture . . . they look back to what is meaningful to them from the past."[70] Refusing to be flexible in adapting to current culture hinders churches from reaching the next generations. This approach to ministry often obstructs necessary change, frustrates leaders, leads to divisions, and impedes growth. Additionally, the church is not a machine to be manipulated but rather a living and growing organism as described by Scripture (1 Cor 10:16, 12:27; Col 2:19). Servant leaders should beware of the false security and the many traps of traditionalism by humbly submitting to the Scriptures and depending on God as their power and source.

Immorality. It is a harsh reality for the church when the minister of God is caught in sin. When brought into the light, sin is always ugly. Sin continually destroys, hurts, and divides. Immorality within a church leader's life brings agony to both the church and the community. Concerning Christian leadership and convictions, Albert Mohler asserts, "As followers of Christ, we know that there is no legitimacy to the claim that our private and public lives can be lived on different moral terms. And we also know that we do not set the moral terms to which we are accountable; they are revealed in God's Word."[71] His argument continues to inspire as he concludes, "Character is the product of

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[70] Ed Stetzer, "The Trap of Tradition: Don't Substitute the Things We Know for the Things of God," *Christianity Today*, April 20, 2016, https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2016/march/trap-of-tradition.html.

[71] Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2012), 78.

conviction," and "leaders of character produce organizations of character."[72] Godly character and Christian purity are vital to the health of the church.

For that reason, when tempted, the servant leader must resist sin and fight for purity (Jas 1:12-15). Paul admonishes the young pastor Timothy to "flee [put away] youthful passions," because sinfulness will disqualify, discredit, and kill crucial relationships (2 Tim 2:22). It is imperative that servant leaders put to death the deeds of the flesh and walk in the Spirit (Col 3:5). Their creditability and witness are at stake. Reflecting on a church leader's character, Gary McIntosh emphasizes that Scripture prioritizes "character before competency, as the overriding crucial dimension for biblical leadership."[73] Moreover, if character or creditability is lost, forgiveness may readily be granted, but trust is much less readily restored.

To prevent servant leaders from falling into this trap, they must put on humility. C. J. Mahaney provides six suggestions to cultivate humility. The Christian should "always reflect on the wonder of the cross of Christ, acknowledge dependence upon God, express gratefulness, practice spiritual disciplines, memorize and meditate on scripture, and cast your cares upon God.[74] Cultivating humility will keep servant leaders away from sin's deceptive power to blind man from his own pride. Faithful leaders pay close attention to their own lives, not neglecting self-care (1 Tim 4:16).

Apathy. Many of today's church leaders may be well-intentioned, but often find themselves burned out or hiding out. With the latter in mind, servant leaders can find themselves buried under a mountain of passionless programs and tedious administrative duties. As a result, their noble tasks become routine and lifeless, thus finding themselves

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[72] Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 79, 81.

[73] Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 99.

[74] C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness* (New York: Multnomah, 2005), 171.

altogether apathetic toward ministry service. Whereas serving the Lord is and has always

been a hard task, laziness is displeasing to the Lord (Gal 6:9).

Working hard and avoiding slothfulness is a command of God. Proverbs

teaches that the sluggard reaps poverty, and the diligent will be rewarded (6:6, 9-11, 10:4,

12:24, 25:15). In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, the apostle Paul told believers to avoid anyone

lazy; if they were not willing to work, then they would not eat. Church members were to

work diligently and earn a living (2 Thess 3:12). Scripture has nothing good to say about

laziness. Laboring with joy, servant leaders should avoid slothfulness (laziness), continue

in good works, embrace a diligent work ethic. This is glorifying to God (1 Cor 10:31).

Developing Deacons as Servant-Leaders

Geiger and Peck write, "The Church needs leaders who build a church of

leadership development from a fountain of precise theological convictions."[75] In the case

of deacons, establishing fundamental theological beliefs and convictions from Scripture

will provide the framework to inform their worldview and practice. Geiger and Peck have

established three foundational beliefs about the realities of creation that the church must

hold.

> Firstly, truth, our generation today can be confused about how to know the truth and where to find absolute truth. However, the people of God are people who believe that God has revealed Himself to mankind and that mankind has the capacity to understand God's revelation. Christians believe and trust in the person and work of Christ, God's ultimate divine revelation. Christians believe in God's Word as the special revealing of truth to his people.
>
> Secondly, time and space, churches make decisions about what they prioritize, how fast they move, how much money they save, as a result of their beliefs about time and space. In short, when church leaders see their lives as undeniably fleeting, it ignites urgency, specifically urgency to develop leadership.
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> Thirdly, the nature of humanity, with the power of the gospel in mind, churches take on the lifelong process to develop potential leaders. Despite the depravity of man, the cost of failure, the risk, the local church builds a culture of leadership development as it expands its faith in God's power to renew. The promise of sanctification must become a hallmark of Christian development.[76]

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[75] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 103.

[76] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 104-12.

Correct theological frameworks necessitate an urgency and priority in developing and equipping church leaders. Often forgotten is the idea of church being depicted as a launching pad, sending agency, or equipping institution. The apostle Paul speaks to the church at Ephesus to this point: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). God's people are people with purpose and mission. O'Brien agrees with the church as the instrument in carrying out Christ's purposes: "Christ sovereignly distributes gifts to the members of his body . . . supplying his people with everything necessary to foster the growth and perfection of the body (v. 13)."[77] Indeed, Christ has provided for his church everything it needs to fulfill its mission inside and outside of the church. Therefore, the church needs to be intentional in leadership development and deployment, especially with its deacons.

Conclusion

Christian leaders preoccupied with faddish leadership trends have frequently led the church off course. Business manager type deacons, as opposed to servant leaders type deacons, endorse an inaccurate interpretation of the biblical office. Deacons competing with elders for leadership of the church reveal an unbiblical and unhealthy practice. Between 1850-1950, Southern Baptist zeal for deacon renewal in the convention blurred the purpose and duties of the New Testament diaconate.[78] This renewal placed deacons in places of authority that Scripture had not authorized. Deacons were given an overwhelming amount of authority and responsibility, while their biblical roles of service to the poor and needy were often neglected. While the chief servants were busy with business matters, the church was without the ministry of mercy, and without the ministry of mercy the church is incomplete. However, redemption of the biblical offices of elder

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[77] O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 297.

[78] Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1992), 10.

and deacon can be appropriated through thoughtful exposition and education on foundational ecclesiastical constructs.

Biblical leadership requires not only biblical structures but also a biblical leadership style, and servant leadership is that style. Prescribed and taught by Jesus, servant leadership by design is about giving one's self away (Mark 10:43-45). Therefore, practicing servant leadership is to lead like Jesus, and for the office of deacon, service is their identity. Because Christ is the model, deacon servanthood by design is both practical and powerful. Jesus, the revolutionary, defined leadership through the term *servant*, which is a synonym for greatness in the new kingdom.[79] Deacons must embrace this ideal if they are to serve the church; for a congregation is not an organization to be managed, but rather a living organism to be led through modeling Christ.

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[79] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 21.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

The project to train deacons at First Baptist Church Kershaw in Kershaw, South Carolina, began on September 13, 2020. The project lasted two weeks and was completed on September 20, 2020.

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the current understanding of servant leadership among deacons of FBCK. The goal was measured by administering the Fundamentals of Servant Leadership Assessment (FSLA)[1] to eighteen members who were either an active deacon, a non-active deacon, or deacon candidate. During week 1 of the project, at the beginning of the three-hour session, this survey was administered, satisfying the requirements of this goal. The goal was considered successful after the FSLA was analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the understanding of servant leadership among the FBCK deacons.

The second goal was to develop the two-session curriculum on biblical servant leadership. This curriculum was based on research done in chapter 2 and 3. An expert panel consisting of one theologian, three pastors, one lay minister, and two deacons utilized a rubric to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[2] The curriculum was revised according to the panel's recommendations. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

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[1] See appendix 1.

[2] See appendix 3.

The third goal of this project was to increase the deacons' knowledge of biblical servant leadership by implementing the curriculum. This goal was measured by comparing pre- and post-curriculum surveys, which measured the change in knowledge regarding biblical servant leadership.[3] During week 2, after the completion of the three-hour session 2 training, the FSLA survey was administered a second time. Eighteen deacons and/or deacon candidates completed the surveys. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a significant positive change statistically in the pre- and post-curriculum survey scores.

Fundamentals of Servant Leadership Assessment

To access the current level of understanding of biblical servant leadership, the Fundamentals of Servant Leadership Assessment was administered to eighteen deacons and deacon candidates. Respondents were asked eight questions to identify their level of commitment toward Christ and spiritual disciplines. They were also instructed to briefly define self-centered leadership and servant-leadership. These questions were followed by fourteen statements to be evaluated using the Likert scale. Statements covered a variety of topics related to servant leadership.

Curriculum Development

First, as stated in chapter 1, the curriculum was designed out of the necessity for a biblically defined leadership pattern for deacons to follow. Second, the curriculum for the training sessions was created based on biblical and theological foundations of chapter 2. Mark 10:42-45 and John 13:12 provided the biblical bases for servant leadership as Jesus' mandate and pattern for future leaders. Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 4:8-13 provided the New Testament bases for qualifications and responsibilities. Third, chapter 3 provided the theoretical and practical research for the curriculum. To bring clarity on the subject of deacons in Southern Baptist life and history, a brief survey was provided. Fourth, the

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[3] See appendix 3.

curriculum was designed to take current and future deacons who are relatively unfamiliar with servant leadership and provide them a biblical framework for how deacons function within the church. While the curriculum was not exhaustive in subject matter and limited in scope, it provided a clear biblical connection between the deacon as servant leader and the servant leadership of Jesus. The curriculum attempted to show why servant leadership and correct polity protects and provides God's Christ-centered direction for his church.

Curriculum Assessment

Prior to the training, the written curriculum was assessed by an expert panel comprised of Jackson Wu, Resident Theologian at Mission One in Phoenix, Arizona; Randy Bell and Darryl Pierce, deacons at First Baptist Church Kershaw, South Carolina; James Law, Teaching Elder of First Baptist Church Gonzales, Louisiana; Frankie Melton, Teaching Elder of First Baptist Church Heath Springs, South Carolina; Tim McCollister, Apologist at First Baptist Church Kershaw, South Carolina; and Timothy Peng, Teaching Elder at Lansing Chinese Christian Church, Lansing Michigan. These men were chosen because of their different areas of expertise in missiology, apologetics, pastoral ministry, and deacon service. The panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope of the lessons, teaching methodology, and the applicability of the curriculum.[4] The panel's critiques were used to guide the process of developing the curriculum and improving teaching methodology.

Selecting the Reading Assignments

Having laid the theological and practical groundwork for the teaching, the next task was to select biblically sound reading assignments that were accessible to the layman. Each reading assignment was specifically selected to address multiple topics related to deacon ministry. In search of Baptist friendly biblically sound material, the online *9Marks Journal* provided multiple articles such as Matt Schmucker's "The Committee-

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[4] See appendix 3.

68

Free, Task-Specific Deacon" and "How to Separate Deacon Work from Elder Work."[5]
Also, Russell Moore's article online at *The Gospel Coalition*, "Is a Deacon Just a
Servant," was excellent in explaining what deacons should be actively doing. Moore
writes, "Deacons organize servant ministry, whether by serving at the Lord's Table, or
setting up a shut-in ministry or by supervising a children's neighborhood immunization
clinic, in order to equip the saints to serve, and to ensure that the service being done
results in the unity of the faith and the advance of the gospel."[6] Supplemental materials
such as these provided clear practical descriptions to support the theological and
theoretical assertions.

Curriculum Implementation

This section provides a detailed summary of the teaching methodology, the
setting of each session, and curriculum content.

Session 1, Lesson 1

Initially, the training session was planned to be held in the FBC Kershaw
fellowship hall where round tables and an intimate environment would promote an
atmosphere for discussion. However, the project was held in August of the year 2020
during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, for safety precautions, which included social
distancing, the teaching was held in the significantly larger FBC Kershaw worship center
where each participant could safely spread out and lower the risk of contracting Covid-
19. While each participant was encouraged to wear a facial mask, mask wearing was not
required for the training.

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[5] Matt Schmucker, "The Committee-Free, Task-Specific Deacon," *9Marks*, April 28, 2010, https://www.9marks.org/article/committee-free-task-specific-deacon/; and "How to Separate Deacon Work from Elder Work," *9Marks*, April 28, 2010, https://www.9marks.org/article/how-separate-deacon-work-elder-work/.

[6] Russell Moore, "Is a Deacon Just a Servant? *The Gospel Coalition*, October 2, 2009, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/is-a-deacon-just-a-servant/.

Technology utilized for communicating the project was a 2018 MacBook Air operating Microsoft PowerPoint while hard wired through an HDMI cable to a 55-inch LED television Screen. All participants were provided a workbook printout of each PowerPoint slide with lines for writing notes alongside each slide. Twenty-minute breaks in-between each teaching session were planned for a time refreshment and fellowship. Coffee, water, tea, canned soft drinks, and a variety of snacks were made available.

As participants entered the first training session they were handed the Pre-Training survey with the expectation of completing it prior to beginning the session. Next, the training began with prayer, an introduction of the teaching schedule, a dissemination of homework assignments to be read prior to session 2, and an explanation of the purpose and need of the project. I began teaching lesson 1 entitled, "Christ, the Servant Leader." The lesson carefully examined and explained Mark 10:35-45 and John 13:1-17 and discussed key servant principles defined and explained by Jesus on servant leadership. The lesson demonstrated that servant leadership was not only modelled by Jesus himself but also a pattern of leadership commanded by Jesus for each and all of his followers.

Session 1, Lesson 2

This lesson intended to make the case that the Acts 6:1-7 prototype deacons were in fact servant leaders. The point was made that selecting the seven servants was not a popularity contest, but each had qualifications to meet and was to be approved by the apostles. The point was also made about the priority of the ministry of the Word and its relation to charity work. A separate group was needed to care for the need of the widows. This teaching made the case that these servant leaders were agents of God's mercy and justice in administering a logistical authority in caring for the church. The lessons concluded by discussing the similarities of the Acts 6 servants and today's diaconate.

Session 1, Lesson 3

The instruction in this lesson focused on the qualifications and office of deacon in 1 Timothy 3:8-12. After a group reading and discussion of the text, each qualification of the deacon was explained in detail. A brief explanation and handout of 1 Timothy 3:11 "wives" or "women" was provided, and encouragement for having "great confidence in the faith" and a "good standing" in the community was given as part of the explanation of 1 Timothy 3:12. Furthermore, most vital to the teaching was showing that God desires character over competency. Jesus must be the source and authority of the deacon's service. Moreover, ministry and ministry effectiveness are primarily a reflection of its leadership. Therefore, without clear biblical order in the church supported by biblical rationale, the health and growth of the church is put at risk.

After clarifying the role and qualifications of the deacon servant leader, it was emphasized that while the deacons held a logistical authority, they were to also be spiritual leaders. A healthy discussion ensued, stressing that as deacons exercised their leadership within and over specific ministries, they were to be models of faithfulness and grace among the congregation. Before concluding session 1, participants were asked to share with the group any new ideas or knowledge they had learned, one area of improvement for them personally, and one area of improvement for FBCK as an organization. Seeking to improve my teaching methodology for the session 2, I asked the group if there was any way I could enhance their learning experience. The session ended in prayer and each student was reminded of the four articles they were to read before next week's session 2.

Session 2, Lesson 4

Having laid the theological framework for deacon as servant leader, the goal of this second session was to establish the practical applications and development of servant leaders. PowerPoint workbooks with lines for taking notes were provided to each participant. During the week 2 session, I began by teaching the fourth lesson of the curriculum, entitled "Basic Ecclesiology and Southern Baptist Deacon Practices." After a

brief review of the prior session's biblical principles of servant leadership, I taught the students a five-point outline on "What Is the Church," beginning with Jesus as the head, then the congregation, mission and purpose, offices, and ordinances. Scripture was provided for each point listed. With that said, I began to teach on the much-anticipated history of Southern Baptist deacon practices.

Many of the methods and practices within Southern Baptist life are simply tradition, especially when it comes to the diaconate. I led the class in a brief yet insightful survey on the shifts and transitions of the Baptist deaconate over the decades. The graph provided was helpful as the participants could visually see the transitions in diaconate practices as Baptist influencers wrote their materials. Most vital to the participants was to discover where and how the terminology of "deacon board" originated in Baptist life. Furthermore, participants were able to distinguish how unbiblical practices of polity easily cause conflict between the elder (single pastor) and the role and responsibilities of the deacons.

In light of this new information, participants became extremely engaged in discussing their past experiences within deacon ministry considering the consequences of an unhealthy environment that an unbiblical church polity creates. Advancing the conversation, I led the class into discussing the three homework articles provided. Each article provided a plethora of insights on the specific practices and responsibilities of the deacon while maintaining honor for the biblical office. Additionally, each article explains well the similarities and differences between the office of elder and deacon. This lesson's discussion on the materials was by far the most insightful and fruitful for participants.

Session 2, Lesson 5

In this lesson the class focused on best practices. Surveying the servant leadership material researched by two scholars, Wong and Davey, the class examined the five best practices or skills needing for development as an effective servant leader. Although the five best practices presented are beneficial, they are not simply a pragmatic

key to successful ministry. The lesson reviewed the topics of servant leader's identity in Christ, Christ-centered internal motivations, interpersonal competency, ability for inspiring others, and the most important trait of integrity of personal character. At the conclusion of this session was a reminder for the church not to rely too much on techniques and best practices because they may forego reliance on God.

Session 2, Lesson 6

The sixth and final session examined three formative traits and three traps to avoid for servant leaders. This lesson provided a practical guide for servant leadership development as the servant leader must grow in intellectual knowledge of God's Word, progress in personal obedience and physical disciplines, and, by means of grace, mature in spiritual disciplines. Last, the lesson covered how to be wise in avoiding common toxic practices in ministry. Students were encouraged to avoid the traps of traditionalism, apathy, and immorality. Of the three traps, much discussion and consideration were given to the topic of "toxic traditionalism." We discussed further how traditionalism and pragmatic approaches to ministry fail the church because they lack evaluation of their traditions or the examination of new approaches to doing ministry. Concluding this last session, a prayer of thankfulness was prayed, appreciation of the student's participation was given, and the post-training survey was distributed and completed by the students.

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Leading the Training Class

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On August 13, 2020 between the hours of 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., the first of the two session 6 lesson training classes took place in the large worship center of First Baptist Church Kershaw. The session 2 took place the following Sunday, August 20, 2020 between the hours of 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Take home dinners were provided to accommodate the students. The training served to equip eighteen members of FBCK in the area of deacon servant leadership. Each lesson of the two sessions focused on one chapter of the curriculum. Students were provided pens and a stapled booklet that contained a lesson

guide for each session with every PowerPoint slide and room available on each page for note taking. Booklet lesson guides were given to each student with the intent of sharing the material with a new disciple. Each lesson included Bible teaching, learning expectations, clear explanations, group interaction, case studies, and times of discussion.

The pre-course survey, the Fundamentals of Servant Leadership Assessment,[7] was administered to the training group before the class began. Each survey was collected prior to the training's beginning. At the completion of all six lessons, the post-course survey was administered to the training group and immediately collected. The survey was the same survey as the previous test but was labeled "post-training."

Analysis of the Training Session Surveys

Results of the FSLA proved interesting and revealing. Since the pre- and post-training surveys were identical, a *t*-test for dependent samples was performed to examine for changes in feedback. *T*-test results were tabulated using a six-point Likert scale. Responses of "Strongly Disagree" were given a value of 1, "Disagree" equaled 2, "Disagree Somewhat" carried the value of 3, "Agree Somewhat" was given 4, "Agree" meant 5, and "Strongly Disagree" were given the value of 6.

The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the means of the pre-survey and post-survey scores; therefore, the pre- and post- survey scores were not due to chance. The research hypothesis states that there will be a difference in pre-survey and post-survey scores. The *t*-test was set up with the value of *p*=.05. *T*-test with this *p* value indicates that it is more than 95 percent likely that variations in answers were not due to chance but were due to an actual increase in knowledge of each participant. Upon administering the *t*-test, the results demonstrated the training curriculum on servant

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[7] See appendix 1.

leadership made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of understanding of servant leadership ($t_{(17)}$ = -5.150880958, p = 0.00004).[8]

The statements with the largest mean score increases were related specifically to the topic of servant leadership. For example, the statement with the largest mean score increases was "I can effectively explain the characteristics of a servant leader." From 72 on the pre-survey to 99 on the post survey, there was a mean increase of 27 percent. The statement, "I have a clear understanding of the servant leadership development process" showed the second largest increase, from 76 on the pre-survey to 99 on the post-survey, a mean increase of 23 percent. "I understand the task of a servant leader" recorded third place with a 78 on the pre-survey and 100 on the post-survey, a 22 percent increase in understanding. "I feel that this seminar was a good experience" registered the fourth highest increase, from 82 on the pre-survey to 104 on the post-survey, a mean increase of 21 percent. The statement, "I was challenged by this model that could work well in my immediate context of ministry" came in fifth place for the largest increase, from 80 to 100, a mean increase of 20 percent. Vital to this training was the statement "I am convinced the servant leadership model is the model for deacons" increased from 91 to 106, a mean increase of 14 percent. Data also showed a comprehensive increase in understanding for participants as they gained a greater biblical knowledge of scripture in relation to servant leadership and deacon ministry.

Conclusion

The completion of the servant leadership training was a significant step forward for FBCK as the church moved to establish a plurality of elders in 2020. As a result of the training, all eighteen trainees increased their knowledge of servant leadership and its relationship to deacon ministry. Many candidates had experienced how many business practices of the world had infiltrated the servant ministry of the deaconate thus leading to

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[8] See appendix 4.

deacons performing like apathetic managers rather than actively serving the congregation. Therefore, the training was a great encouragement for many faithful deacons who have been true to their calling as servant leaders. Additionally, the project provided a clear biblical path to follow for new and current deacons to emulate and reproduce.

In addition, providing a clear differentiation between the roles and responsibilities was comforting for many of deacons as they desire to simply serve the church with all their hearts minus the difficult elder responsibilities. As this training occurred months prior to FBCK transitioning to a plurality of elders, the training also served to equip trainees with a greater understanding of a New Testament patterns of polity. Even more exciting was that because of the increase of knowledge in New Testament ecclesiology, trainees were effortlessly able to facilitate the congregation's comprehension of elder plurality through natural relationships. This was evident in that FBCK's vote for transitioning into an elder-led plurality was a unanimous vote of approximately seventy members.

Another way the project proved helpful was by the simple reminder for the trainees that God's Word is sufficient and necessary. As FBCK trainees seek to honor God's Word in all that it says, this project helped connect the dots between the New Testament and actual church polity. For whatever reason, there was an extreme disconnect between how modern church polity actually functions and what the New Testament teaches. This project was able to connect the theoretical and practical aspects of polity, while at the same time maintaining a high regard for Jesus' servant leadership mandates. Having been influenced by pragmatic business models of ministry, servants who lead well seemed incomprehensible. However, Scripture again shows itself sufficient as it provides a clear pattern of church structure which is necessary for Jesus' church to follow. Therefore, FBCK servant leaders can have a greater confidence in God's Word.

Furthermore, the more senior members of the training group were extremely appreciative of the historical survey of the deaconate within Southern Baptist life. Many

discerned that changes in structure and practice were needed but were ignorant on how to transition or even where to become educated on the matter. Much trust was gained from the trainees during this project as I consistently modeled and taught them to trust in God's Word as the final authority in all things related to church. This project helped trainees have more trust in me as their Teaching Elder.

Finally, the project introduced a reproducible process of training future servant leaders for both the deaconate and elder leadership. The congregation has begun to utilize the term *servant leader* when referring to both the deacons and newly appointed elders. During the ordination service, many of the Scriptures from the project were utilized to describe the attitude and competency of the deaconate. The new terminology, a clear biblical model based on Jesus' mandate and New Testament patterns, and a new practical development plan for training future deacons, describes and determines the future of FBCK's deacon ministry.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This ministry project was a tremendous help as it served to highlight the deficiencies in FBCK's understanding and practice of deacon ministry. While the FBCK deacons were ready and willing to be led into more biblical patterns of service, the project provided both a biblical framework and practical applications for moving forward in ministry. A new framework was much needed for the FBCK deaconate.

The project provided biblical expectations for deacons and established a new process for developing future deacons. The research yielded the biblical framework for servant leadership and deacon service. A survey of past Baptist practices was constructive for those with decades of service, and highlighting practices and skills to be developed will facilitate future training. Most importantly, data from the administered surveys indicated that positive change occurred during the curriculum project's implementation.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum to train deacons at First Baptist Church Kershaw, South Carolina, to be servant leaders. This purpose was effectively achieved by creating and applying the training curriculum to current and future deacons of FBCK who showed a statistically significant positive change in their knowledge of servant leadership.

<center>**Evaluation of the Project's Goals**</center>

Three goals were determined at the outset of the project: assess the knowledge of current and future deacons, develop curriculum, and increase knowledge by teaching the curriculum.

Goal 1: Assess Knowledge

The first goal was to assess the current understanding of servant leadership among the deacons. This goal was accomplished by administering the FSLA before the curriculum teaching to the eighteen deacon and deacon candidates. The eighteen trainees were chosen because they were either currently serving the deaconate, have rolled off of service, or were potential deacons. Each trainee was asked, to the best of their ability, to complete the survey. This goal was considered successful when the eighteen trainees from FBCK turned in their FSLA before the training.

Goal 2: Developed Curriculum

The second goal was to develop the curriculum on biblical servant leadership. Initially, a six-week curriculum was created, but due to the constraints and safety considerations of the Covid-19 pandemic, the training period was concentrated into a two-session, three lessons per session period. Each session format included interactive PowerPoint teaching, a curriculum guide for notetaking with reading assignments inserted, and group discussion. The sessions' topics included foundations and biblical framework for servant leadership and historical trends of Southern Baptist deacons, and practical tools and instructions for deacon service. Participants were required to complete assigned homework and engage in group discussions. The course primarily focused on developing a Christ-like servant leadership character. This goal was measured by a panel consisting of two FBCK deacons, three local teaching elders, one apologist, and one resident theologian. The expert panel utilized a rubric to measure the curriculum's biblical

<center>79</center>

faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability.[1] This goal was successfully met when the expert panel reviewed the curriculum and rated each lesson as meeting or exceeding the sufficient level for each evaluation criterion.

Goal 3: Increase Knowledge

The third goal was to increase the deacons' knowledge of servant leadership. Participants in this training course were the entirety of current, previous, and potential FBCK deacons. This goal was measured by administering the FSLA. Participants again completed the FSLA immediately after the final class session. The questionnaire helped measure any increase in knowledge about the biblical basis of servant leadership as a deacon. A *t*-test of independent samples was used to determine a positive statistical difference between the pre-class and post-class FSLA.[2] This goal was accomplished per the results of the *t*-test, which demonstrated positive, statistically significant differences from the comparison of the pre- and post-FSLA given during the training series. All class participants were invited to schedule a follow-up time of discussion with the elder(s) about anything related to the material or reflect upon their class experience.

Though this project was successful with the completion of the three goals, multiple strengths and weaknesses emerged.

Strengths of the Project

Every research project can be evaluated, and suggestions can be made for improvement. While the project design and implementation are far from perfect, several strengths should be addressed.

[1] See appendix 2.

[2] See appendix 3.

Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities

The curriculum's implementation was a great encouragement for the FBCK trainees as it brought clarity to the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of the deacon. The training was a catalyst for setting a new and clear biblical precedence for the deaconate at FBCK as servant leaders. The training was refreshing as the FBCK servant leaders sought to honor the patterns of leadership established by the New Testament.

Reinforcing Service

The project reinforced the importance of the deacon as a servant leader. Service in and to the congregation is an attainable goal. The trainees were encouraged to follow Christ with all their hearts and live out their calling among the congregation. Participants were exhorted to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as they serve their neighbor with all their hearts. Not only does the congregation need them to fulfill their calling as a servant, but they also honor God in and through their obedience. Being faithful in serving Jesus' church is not an option for the deacon but a privilege.

Prepared to Equip

The project resulted in the well-designed, simple, and implementable training curriculum developed for future deacon training. FBCK is now prepared with a contextually specific and comprehensive curriculum on the often-confusing topic of Baptist polity and deacon responsibilities. The curriculum will now be available to equip future FBCK deacons and train other local church deacons. Additionally, the curriculum's scope and nature make it extremely adaptable; therefore, it can be easily contextualized for utilization in different cultural settings.

Raising Expectations

The FBCK deacons' expectations were raised as the servant leadership model of leadership was explained in detail and determined as simple, biblical, and achievable. Each deacon at FBCK is expected to serve well as each deacon will be held accountable

by their peers, the congregation, and the newly appointed elders. FBCK continues to uphold the authority of God's Word in the highest regard and expectations are unapologetically explained and clarified for each leader of FBCK. Faithfulness to the biblical precedence of servant leadership for FBCK deacons is now non-negotiable.

Honest Discussions

A final strength was the numerous conversations on the confusion of polity in Southern Baptist Life. At FBCK, authentic community is a core value, and our trainees enjoyed keeping it real. Multiple trainees shared their personal experiences in Southern Baptist deacon ministry. As truth was revealed, trainees were amazed at how far Baptist polity in our local area has moved away from New Testament patterns of ecclesiology.

Trainees were continually open and brutely honest about hardships regarding having unqualified deacons controlling and manipulating church leadership. Also mentioned was that churches annually voted on deacons based on a popular vote, totally disregarding biblical qualification based in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Experiences of deacons lording control over the single elder in the church and entire deacon boards being apathetic to their duties in serving the congregation were also mentioned. Further discussions were had on the absence and total disregard for biblical foundations of ministry, pragmatism, traditionalism, and preaching methodology. While some conversations led the group down a few rabbit trails, trainees seemed to revel in the biblical truth presented in the project's biblical instruction. The trainees frequently conveyed that hardship was brought upon the deacons, the congregation, and the single elder due to the neglect for biblical faithfulness by the congregation. Honest and truthful discussions about these difficulties seemed to be a healing time for trainees as they shared their concerns. FBCK's continued culture of authenticity facilitated these constructive conversations lending to a better learning experience for all.

Weaknesses of the Project

With any project of this nature, strengths are usually accompanied by weaknesses. While most of the project went according to plan, four weaknesses emerged. Though some weaknesses were unavoidable, these weaknesses point to the project's design flaws.

Long Training Sessions

The project's first weakness was that the training took place in two separate three-hour long sessions. Long sessions were not originally a part of the process; however, due to Covid-19 recommended safety guidelines, the original six-week training sessions were condensed into two longer sessions. While the goal was always to teach the planned thirty-minute lesson, discuss for fifteen minutes, and break for the last fifteen minutes, sessions never went according to schedule. At times, the teaching was long, or the discussions went longer than expected, or even the breaks became long periods of Christian fellowship.

The long training sessions were a weakness because some vital material was condensed and quickly explained due to time constraints and tiring trainees. The planned three-hour training session quickly became three and a half hours of material and discussion. As stated, the best approach would have been to provide three two-hour sessions or six one-hour sessions. More time between each lesson would have allowed trainees to gain greater clarity on the material, thus content better understood, generating a more thoughtful and productive time of discussion.

Additionally, my additional explanations, illustrations, and personal experiences had undoubtedly added to each lesson's time allotment. It could be said that I became "preachy" while teaching some of the material. Though the extra material and explanations may have helped the learning experience, it was not helpful to the session's time allocation.

Teaching Environment

The second weakness that limited the project was the large classroom environment of the worship center. As stated previously, due to safety precautions, the trainees were comfortably and safely separated in the sizeable FBCK worship center. Had there not been this situation, trainees would have been placed at round tables in groups of three to four per table inside the quaint FBCK Fellowship Hall.

Additionally, having intimate knowledge of each of the trainees, a few may have had reservations about the project being held inside the worship center as they may deem the space a more sacred place of worship rather than informal teaching. Moreover, it was evident that some trainees did not feel comfortable sharing and discussing in such a large group. Thus, a small group of individuals sitting together would have facilitated more dialogue. Therefore, the spacious nature of the worship center limited curriculum discourse to a few outspoken individuals.

Lack of Follow Up

Following the training, participants were encouraged to contact me with any further questions or request additional reading materials. While a few participants expressed their appreciation for the training itself, no further contact was made or material requested. Afterward, multiple trainees shared their enthusiasm for the deaconate moving forward, yet, due to the limitations of gathering during a pandemic, no immediate follow-up or training occurred. While the project had the potential for further training and development, no specific or creative follow-up method was planned, limiting the project to a one-time learning experience.

Lack of Skill Development

While the project curriculum intended to train and develop servant leaders, more content was spent defining and explaining servant leadership rather than developing servant leaders. Though brief characteristics, traits, and areas of formation were surveyed, little time was spent developing the deacon servant leader's practical skills. Though the project

was not intended to be exhaustive training material, there should have been less time convincing and more time developing the servant leaders.

What I Would Do Differently

If given the opportunity to re-design the project, multiple improvements would be made. While many environmental situations were beyond my control, creative and more thoughtful training methods could have been implemented, making for a better experience for the trainees and me.

Expand the Teaching Sessions

The first adjustment would be minor. I would break the sessions into three two-hour sessions. In the first week I would spend the entire time on passages related to Jesus and his servant leadership. The second week would be specific to deacons, the Acts 6 prototype deacons, deacon qualifications, and possibly surveying more deacon ministry passages. The third session would be a session specific to practical methodology, surveying past and current trends in Baptist deacon practices and then emphasizing the need to develop deacon servant leaders. Trainees would enjoy the more concise and specific teachings, the lessons would be easier to teach, there could be one long break in-between lessons, and the overall experience would not be so draining.

Creative Teaching Methods

With the amazing technological and digital breakthroughs of our generation, creative teaching methods could be explored. I could contact potential trainees before the training, easily email the FSLA, or have a YouTube page prepared with a link to the FSLA. Upon completing each FSLA, I could confirm attendance for the training sessions with each participant, thus allowing me to prepare for a specific number of trainees with possibly a strategic seating arrangement to invite more dialogue. Then, trainees could be sent a link to a ten-minute video where I explained the project's premise, requesting them to read critical passages related to the topic; therefore, the project would not have an

unanticipated beginning. Similarly, after the training, a video and supplemental material and evaluations could be electronically sent to trainees for a strategic follow-up plan.

Post Training Strategic Development

Implementing the trainees' training session was a great leap forward for the deaconate at FBCK; however, I could intentionally taken the time to interview and follow-up with each trainee for help with their individual growth needs. Portions of the curriculum intended for skill development were already summations of large topics, such as relational skills or spiritual formation. Therefore, there would be an excellent opportunity to tailor a developmental approach for every trainee to meet specific needs.

Theological Reflections

It is sobering to consider that "equipping" the saints has far too often taken a back seat to "entertaining" the saints, or elders "leading" the saints has transitioned into elders "appeasing" the saints. By God's designs, his ambassadors are to be equipped, nourished, and mobilized for the ministry's work. Elders have a biblical responsibility to properly feed and nourish Jesus' church for the mission.

The Gospel Matters

God's mission begins with God's gospel. God did not give us his gospel so that we could simply embrace it and be converted. The gospel is a river of life; a gift from God that keeps on giving. Talk about church, the Great Commission, and mobilizing the flock of God becomes worthless without each saint daily treasuring the goodness of God's gospel. The frustrations and exhaustion from daily living in this broken world are hard enough, but apart from the gospel's consistent nourishment of a Christian's soul, darkness and apathy become abundant. Embraced by faith, the gospel of the Father's great salvation through the redeeming Son, empowered and accomplished by the Holy Spirit, must be central to the Christian's daily thoughts.

To love the church, love the saints, and love the mission is an empty pursuit if someone does not grasp the glory of the gospel. God's glory dwells in the gospel. God's glory is the purpose of gospel advancement. It would be foolish for one to put the cart before the horse—to love the bride of Christ, but not treasure the gospel of Christ. The gospel is sufficient, a channel of joy serving as a life source of power (2 Pet 1:3). Through the gospel, saints are brought into the household of God, and this must never be forgotten. A love for God's church begins with a love for God's gospel. Furthermore, I am encouraged by the saints at FBCK and how they are continually growing and learning to dwell in the beauty of the gospel.

God's Word Matters

Jesus' church is "a pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). Truth defines the church. The foundation of the church is God's Word (Eph 2:20). The church body grows in faith as God's people hear the Word (Rom 10:17). The church is governed by the Word, sanctified by the Word, and is unified in the Word. Jesus' church lives by truth, and without that truth it ceases to exist.

It is almost inconceivable that Jesus' church would need to be reminded of its need for obedience to the Scriptures; however, it is all too familiar today that God's Word is neglected and/or watered down for God's people. Most appalling are Southern Baptist pastors and deacons who nominally practice what they profess; Scripture being their ultimate authority. Scripture is the ultimate authority for all things church, and nothing takes precedence over Jesus and his Scripture. Scripture is sufficient, providing everything the saints need for salvation and godly living. Scripture is clear, plainly understood. Scripture is necessary, and the saints need God's Word to teach them how to live, know God better, and receive salvation.

I am encouraged by the saints at FBCK, especially the servant leaders. Over the years, the saints at FBCK have humbly learned to love and submit to God's Word. I have been told from many of the saints that submitting to the supremacy of God's Word

was different and challenging initially; however, over time, it became refreshing and nourishing to the soul. I was excited for FBCK through this project, as servant leaders gladly embraced the ecclesiological challenge for the deaconate. Moreover, their faithfulness to the Word made for a simple transition to plural elder-led congregationalism.

Great Commission Matters

Jesus' church plays an important role in redemptive history. Jesus' church is divine and must be treated accordingly, and the Great Commission is not simply something the church does, but the church was born from mission; therefore, the Great Commission is the identity of the church. Accordingly, the church upholds the truth, and spreads the truth, while the world is trying to suppress the truth. On the topic of church organization, God is not silent. Scripture deals clearly with questions of ecclesiology. For that reason, matters of ecclesiology within the church directly affect the mission of the church.

As a result, through this project, I was extremely convicted and utterly convinced that the topic of polity is essential to Jesus' church. It is clear that God's Word decrees, not requests, that Christians unify their lives together, sitting comfortably within the New Testament patterns of corporate structure. Biblical polity does many things, but among them, it situates a Christian under the rule of Christ, and that is what it means to make disciples of Christ.

<div align="center">

Personal Reflections

</div>

This six-year journey toward completion was a journey of grace. The first three years of class time forged lasting friendships with classmates and professors. The reading and classwork exactly coincided with my first years of pastoral ministry. By God's grace, he provided an overwhelming blessing with the fellowship and academic knowledge I needed to lead the revitalization of a local church in rural South Carolina.

The next three years of writing were prolonged, as I was isolated from the empowerment of on-campus interaction. The daily demands of ministry were exhausting as a single elder while navigating and restoring FBCK after a church coup had left me in an arduous state of ministry melancholy. After two years of healing, God restored my joy enough to complete what I had started. FBCK was ready to move forward, I was ready to move forward, and the Holy Spirit had provided His power and presence like never before.

While I am ecstatic about graduating with a doctorate, the cap and gown represent so much more than a ministry project complete with data and analysis. This project was about empowerment; empowering others to fulfill their calling to God. The project and the graduation represent a journey of grace. God was taking a little Roman Catholic boy from a small town in Louisiana, opening his eyes, teaching him to treasure the gospel, helping him to love people, teaching him to teach others, and empowering him to be courageous and do things he could have never imagined himself doing. God's grace in my life is amazing. Furthermore, I am honored to be a part of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary doctoral graduates, men and women who have joined together willing to do hard things all for the cause of Christ.

Conclusion

This project identified a vital need for growth in a particular area of ministry at First Baptist Church Kershaw and sought to facilitate growth in that specific area. This ministry project aimed to renew and equip the vital ministry of deacons for servant leadership.

While many ministry areas needed renewal and equipping at the time of beginning the project, FBCK was not ready or willing to move toward a plural elder-led congregational polity; for this reason, equipping the deaconate was the next alternative. At the same time, concentrating on creating a biblical polity and simultaneously emphasizing the authority of Scripture from the pulpit every Sunday allowed time for the church to be biblically convinced and challenged for a change of practice polity with the

FBCK diaconate. As time passed, the deacons fell in love with God's Word and were willing to sit comfortably under scriptural authority. As a result, transitioning the FBCK deaconate from a board of managers mentality into a servant leadership mindset was effortless. Like the Bereans, FBCK's current and future deacons simply needed to see the words of Scripture and have sound explanations provided, enabling them to be equipped for and faithful to their calling.

The future is bright for FBCK. Even though this church has weathered challenging storms, this faith family has renewed and realigned its bylaws to a biblical pattern of deacon ministry and established plural elder-led congregationalism as its formal polity. I believe God was and is honored by this faithful congregation as they have committed themselves to Christ and his Word. With certainty, I am convinced that as the teaching elder of FBCK, I am more prepared than ever to lead this amazing congregation into the future.

APPENDIX 1

FUNDAMENTALS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP
PRE- AND POST-ASSESSMENT

The following instrument is the Fundamentals of Servant Leadership
Assessment (FSLA). Some general questions will be followed by a fourteen-question
survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose is to assess each deacon's
present level of theological understanding and confidence in modeling servant leadership.

FUNDAMENTALS OF SERVANT
LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the participant's current understanding of servant leadership.

This research is being conducted by Bobby Massey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the training, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the training. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Please provide a 4-digit personal identification number. This number will be used to match up pre-training assessments with post-training assessments. Thus, you will be required to provide this number on the follow-up assessment. Please do not lose it.

Participant's Personal Identification Number _____

Directions: *Please answer the following questions about yourself and your current ministry role at FBC Kershaw.*

Date:_____

1. How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? _____

2. How many years have you been a member in a Bible-believing church? _____

3. Are you currently serving as a ministry leader, teacher, or discipler of other believers?
    a. Yes
    b. No

4. How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions? _____

5. Is memorizing Scripture a present practice of yours?
    a. Yes
    b. No

6. Do you have a daily discipline of praying with and for other people?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. Briefly define self-centered leadership:
    _____
    _____

8. Briefly define servant leadership:
    _____
    _____

Directions: Respond to the statements, giving your opinion, based on the following scale.

        SD = strongly disagree
        D = disagree
        DS = disagree somewhat
        AS = agree somewhat
        A = agree
        SA = strongly agree

9. I am familiar with servant leadership.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10. I was challenged by this model that it could work well in my immediate context of ministry.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. I understand the tasks of a servant leader.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12. I can effectively explain the characteristics of a servant leader.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13. I believe this model of leadership can be effective in promoting church health.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14. I am familiar with the process Jesus used to mentor leaders.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15. I have a clear understanding of the servant leadership development process.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16. I have a good biblical knowledge of servant leadership.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17. I believe the Bible is absolutely sufficient and authoritative to address models of leadership.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18. I am committed to practicing the model of servant leadership.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19. I am convinced the servant leadership is the model for deacons.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20. I believe that I could teach this curriculum.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21. I feel that this seminar was a good experience.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

22. I am convinced that Jesus mandates servant leadership.

        SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

APPENDIX 2

DEACON SERVANT LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM

Having demonstrated the foundational constructs and necessity for servant leadership training for deacons in the preceding three chapters, this section outlines and describes the preparation and implementation of the project. The following workbook contains the curriculum for training deacons into thriving servant leaders. Included is the six-chapter training series and reading articles for each session.

Reading List for Servant Leader Training

1. *Is a Deacon Just a Servant*?, by Russell Moore

2. *How to Separate Deacon Work from Elder Work*, by Matt Schmucker

3. *Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servant*, by Jamie Dunlop

4. *The Committee-Free, Task Specific Deacon*, by Matt Schmucker

<div align="center">**Servant Leadership Session 1:**

Biblical Basis of Servant Leadership</div>

Objective: Establishing the New Testament Basis for Servant Leadership

Chapter #1 Outline "Christ, the Servant Leader"

Slide 1:   **Welcome**
- Bobby Massey, First Baptist Church Kershaw
- Deacon as Servant
- My Ministry Philosophy: Ministry effectiveness are primarily a reflection of its leadership.

Slide 2:   **Project Introduction: Why this Project?**
- I Love God's Church, I Love God's Order, I Love God's Word
- My Tribe: Southern Baptist need to practice biblical patterns of leadership
- Redeem the Office of Deacon to its rightful position
- Equipping active, inactive, and future deacons is vital to a healthy and sustainable ministry
- True greatness and leadership are achieved through selfless service.

Slide 3:   **Project Goals and Expectations**
- To present Jesus as the model for the office of deacon
- SUNDAY SESSION #1 Theological Framework
    - To share the biblical origins, qualifications, and purpose of the deacons
- SUNDAY SESSION #2 Practical Applications
    - To equip deacons with certain skills needed to serve well

Slide 4:   **Chapter One: "Christ the Servant Leader"**
- Title slide

Slide 5:   **What is Servant Leadership?**
- Defining Servant Leadership: selflessness, others over self
- Russell Moore, "The question is not whether deacons serve or lead. Leadership, scripturally defined, is servanthood."
- Robert Greenleaf, "servant first" "wanting to serve, to serve first"
- Dr. Rick Ferguson, "Christ's revolutionary way of the heart which challenges our core beliefs and values, rivets our affections on Jesus himself, and compels us to live and love like him."

Slide 6:   **Jesus' Teaching on Leadership #1: Mark 10:35-45**
Guided Group Exegesis Exercise
- Biblical Context: authoritarian rule, domination
- Intended Meaning: the paradox, a new ethic
- Interpretation: Servant leaders follow Jesus rather than seek position
- Application for then and now (Group Discussion)

Slide 7:	**The Servant Principles Defined by Christ- From Gene Wilkes**

Slide 7:   **The Servant Principles Defined by Christ- From Gene Wilkes**

1. Humble themselves and wait for God to exalt them.
2. Follow Jesus rather than seek position.
3. Give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others.
4. Risk serving others because they trust that God is in control.
5. Take up Jesus' towel of servanthood to meet the needs of others.
6. Share their responsibility and authority with others to meet a greater need.
7. Multiply their leadership by empowering others to lead.

Slide 8:   **Jesus' Teaching on Leadership #2: John 13:1-11**
              Guided Group Exegesis Exercise

- Biblical Context:
- Intended Meaning:
- Interpretation: Servant leaders seek others needs over themselves
- Application for then and now (Group Discussion)

Slide 9:   **Group Activity and Group Discussion**
              List Several Ways in which Jesus was a Servant or Scripture that describes Jesus as servant.

- Any outstanding questions you would like to ask or discuss?

Chapter #2 Outline: "The Origin and Purpose of the Prototype Deacons"

Slide 1:   **Title Slide** "The Origin and Purpose of the Prototype Deacons"

Slide 2:   **Guided Group Exegesis Exercise of Acts 6:1-7**
- Biblical Context: disunity, an injustice, limited leadership
- Key Word: uses of all three forms of "*diakonia*" in the passage
- Key Concepts: (Prototype) precursor to the later deacon ministry, servant leaders, the formal office was not yet established

Slide 3:   **Five Qualifications for these Seven Servant Leaders (Acts 6:3)**
1. Male, not prescriptive but descriptive
2. From within the Congregation
3. Good Reputation: integrity, honest, above reproach
4. Full of the Spirit: born again and walking in the Spirit
5. Full of Wisdom: biblical and practical knowledge
6. Silent Qualification: Greek speaking

Slide 4:   **A Process of Choosing Bathed in Prayer**
- Congregation Nominates
- Apostles publicly approve and install
- Not popularity but qualifications that matter

Slide 5:   **Overview of the Text**
- Practical Problem and Practical Solution: (welfare/ need servants)
- Social Problem and Social Solution: (prejudice/ need mediators)
- Spiritual Problem and Spiritual Solution: (division/ need unifiers)

Slide 6:   **Purpose of the Prototype Deacons**
- Lead through Service and Caring
  - Deliver charitable goods and money to the needy
- Promote Gospel Proclamation (Acts 6:1,4)
- Agents of God's mercy and justice on humanity

Slide 7:   **Characteristics and Responsibilities of Prototype Deacons:**
- Administrators, organizers, doers, helpers, supporters, builders, givers, ministers of mercy, relational, influencers, compassionate
- Not limited to Deeds of Service: Stephen and Philip
- Hold a logistical authority

Slide 8:   **Comparing Servant Leader Ministries (Then and Now)**
Group Discussion:
- List Several Similar and Different Ways todays deacons function compared to the Acts 6 servant leaders.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
- Any outstanding questions you would like to ask or discuss?

Chapter 3 Outline: "Qualifications and Purpose of the Office of Deacons"

Slide 1: **Title Slide:** "Qualifications and Purpose of the Office of Deacons"

Slide 2: **Guided Group Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:8-12**
- Context: divisive behavior in the church of Ephesus
  - Unqualified people has seemingly become shepherds
  - Disorder and confusion necessitated order: clarification of roles, responsibilities, and character qualifications

Slide 3: **Qualifications of the Deacon Candidate (3:8-12)**
- (3:8) deacon(s), plurality, duties necessitate a shared leadership
- (3:8) dignified, not double tongued, not addicted, not greedy
- (3:9) holding the mystery of faith
  - Gospel Clarity: God, Man, Christ, Repentance
- (3:10) tested (examined) and proven blameless
- (3:12) faithful and responsible in marriage and family life

Slide 4: **Qualifications for Female Deacons (3:11)**
- Paul's use of the Greek word "gynaikas" in describing this group
- Brief explanation of "wives" or "women" interpretation?
  - Romans 16:1-2 Phoebe the deaconess
- Resource handout with arguments for and against was provided

Slide 5: **Encouragement for Deacons (3:12)**
- "Good standing" (influence) and great confidence in the church
- "Great confidence" in the faith. Faithful service and genuine obedience bring a greater sense of confidence in God as activating faith causes growth
- Necessity of character over competency

Slide 6: **Jesus and Servant-Leaders**
- Jesus is the *source* of deacon's ministry (Author of Life)
- Jesus is the *model* of deacon's ministry (Follow Me)
- Jesus is the *equipper* of the deacon's ministry (Holy Spirit)
- Jesus is the *head* over the deacons (Chief Shepherd)
- Jesus is the *motivation* of the deacon's ministry (Commissioned)

Slide 7: **Conclusion to the Matter**
- Ministry and ministry effectiveness are primarily a reflection of its leadership. Therefore, without clear biblical order in the church supported by biblical rationale, the health and the growth of the church is put at risk.

Slide 8: **Group Discussion and Reflection on the Session #1**
New Knowledge
- What New Ideas or Knowledge was Learned Today

Areas of Improvement
- What's one area of improvement for you **personally** as a deacon?
- What's one area of improvement **organizationally** as a diaconate?
- Any outstanding questions you would like to ask or discuss?
- END SESSION 1: Homework Articles provided for additional reading

<div align="center">**Servant Leadership Session 2:**
Practical Application and Development</div>

Objective: Establishing the Practical Applications and Development of Servant Leaders

Chapter #4 Outline: "Basic Ecclesiology and Southern Baptist Deacon Practices"

Slide 1: **Title Slide: Servant Leadership: Following the Example of Jesus**
- Sunday Session #1 Theological Framework
- Sunday Session #2 Practical Applications

Slide 2: **Servant Leadership Biblical Principles Reviewed**
- Chapter One Review: Mark 10:35-45, John 13:12
- Chapter Two Review: Acts 6:1-7
- Chapter Three Review: 1 Timothy 3:8-12

Slide 3: **Chapter 4: Basic Ecclesiology and Southern Baptist Deacon Practices**

Slide 4: **What is the Church 101?**
- Jesus the Head and Source (Eph 5:23, Col. 1:18)
- Congregation (Matt 18:15-20, Acts 6:1-6, 1 Cor. 5:2, 9-13)
- Mission and Purpose (Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:18-20)
- Two Offices: Elders and Deacons (Phil 1:1, 1 Tim. 3:1-13)
- Two Ordinances: Baptism and Lords Supper

Slide 5: **Southern Baptist Deacon Practices: Deacons as Managers**
A brief survey of well-intended, but fallible influencers, and reformers
1. 1851 Howell: *"The Deaconship"*
2. 1867 Pendleton *"Baptist Church Manual"*
3. 1925 Burroughs: *"Honoring the Deaconship"*
4. 1955 Robert Naylor: *"The Baptist Deacon"*
5. 1968 Howard B. Foshee: *"Now that You're a Deacon"*
6. 1979 Charles W. Deweese: *"The Emerging Role of Deacons"*
7. 1984 Frederick Agar: *"The Deacon at Work"*

Slide 6: **Graph of key influencers and their trends and adjustments over time**
- Survey shows the move from managers to spiritual mentors

Slide 7: **Discussion of Russell Moore's article from homework reading**
- "deacons organize servant ministry, whether by serving at the Lord's Table, or setting up a shut-in ministry or by supervising a children's neighborhood immunization clinic, in order to equip the saints to serve, and to ensure that the service being done results in the unity of the faith and the advance of the gospel."

Slide 8: **Clarifying Roles and Responsibility: Matt Shumaker's article**
- Discussion of Deacon work, Staff's work, Elder's work
- **Matt Shumaker writes,** "be aware of the overlapping areas of responsibility that elders and deacons may have, and work to clarify which group should handle different issues. **Fight against turfiness.** Communicate openly and thoroughly with each other. In doing so, you will fight off division and model godly unity among the leaders for all the flock to see, profit from, and imitate.

Slide 9:   **Group Discussion: Cause and Effect of Unclear Roles**
- How does a deacon as managers/rulers contradict the servant leader role?
- Why is it important to clarify roles, responsibilities, and authority in organizational structure?
- Any outstanding questions you would like to ask or discuss?
- Review Article: Committee Free, Task Specific

Chapter 5 Outline: "Five Best Practices of Servant Leadership"

Slide 1:   **Title Slide: Five Best Practices of Servant Leadership**
- Wong and Davies' Research and Conclusions explained

Slide 2:   **Five Best Practices: #1 Identity**
- Explained: As Christians increase in understanding and appreciation of their redemption through the gospel, worldview is clarified, identity actualized, and allegiances solidified. A deacon servant leader's identity must be built on the primary foundation that their life is in Christ. (Colossians 3:3)
- **Deacons are living demonstrations of the reality of all they believe**
- Discussion: Why is this path crucial for servant leaders?

Slide 3:   **Five Best Practices: #2 Motivations**
- Explained: Effective deacon servant leaders lead by encouraging, motivating, and serving others, and an established love for Christ is that motivation (Matt 22:36-39). Love and passion for ministry is in direct correlation with a love for Jesus.
- **Deacons embody the habitual, sacrificial attitude of Christ**
- Discussion: Why is this path crucial for servant leaders?

Slide 4:   **Five Best Practices: #3 Relational**
- Explained: Followers need a leader to listen to them, consult and involve them in decision making, and express confidence in them and their opinions. Learning the important interpersonal skills of listening, gaining consensus, problem-solving, and team building is an essential method for servant leaders (Eph. 4 1-6).
- **Deacons collaborating with others well, problem solving, always aiming for the best interest of the church**

Slide 5:   **Five Best Practices: #4 Inspirational**
- Explained: Servant leaders challenge others to live for a higher purpose, challenging others to strive for excellence (Acts 1:8).
- **Deacons inspire others to achieve a higher mission**
- Discussion: Why is this path crucial for servant leaders?

Slide 6:   **Five Best Practices: #5 Character**
- Explained: A servant leader's private and public life matters. In holding "great confidence in the faith," servant leaders become a product of their biblical convictions (1 Tim. 3:13). Christian leaders are to be transparent in all their transactions, displaying humility, and must consistently examine themselves (2 Cor 13:5, Lam 3:40).
- **Deacons' private and public life matter to Christ.**
- Discussion: Why is this path crucial for servant leaders?

Chapter 6 Outline: "Three Formative Traits and Three Traps to Avoid"

Slide 1:   **Title Slide: Three Formative Traits and Three Traps to Avoid**

Slide 2:   **Servant Leader Formation: #1 Devoted to the Word**
                Intellectual Formation:
- Defined: wisdom is revealed in the lifestyle of a leader who makes decisions that honor God (Prov. 9:10). Knowledge of God through the Word and obedience to the Word in all areas of life.

Slide 3:   **Servant Leader Formation: #2 Disciplined for the Ministry**
                Physical Formation:
- Defined: Presenting our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:2). Obedient and responsible for controlling the flesh and disciplining the body for godliness (1 Cor. 10:31).

Slide 4:   **Servant Leader Formation: #3 Nurtured for the Journey**
                Spiritual Formation:
- Defined: Spiritual nourishment is necessary for the Christian's journey, even simplicity is a vital practice of life (1 Thess. 4:11). Growing in grace means drawing near to God by means of grace (Jam. 4:8)
- (Prayer, Study, Worship, Confession, Meditation, Fasting, Fellowship)

Slide 5   **Why are each of these three formations vital to the Servant Leader?**

Slide 6:   **Three Traps to Avoid in Servant Leadership: #1 Traditionalism**
- Defined: Unlike healthy traditions, toxic traditionalism normally avoids risk, fears the unknown, is inflexible, resistant to change, etc. Intentionally evaluate and stay renewed.
- Discussed: Why is this trap important to recognize?

Slide 7:   **Three Traps to Avoid in Servant Leadership: # 2 Apathy**
- Defined: Mountains of passionless programs and tedious administrative duties can burn you out. Next, you find yourself burned out and hiding out. Often noble task can become lifeless and routine. Beware and fight against these attitudes, and labor with joy.
- Discussion: Why is this trap important to recognize?

Slide 8:   **Three Traps to Avoid in Servant Leadership: #3 Immorality**
- Defined: Sin continually destroys, hurts, and divides. Immorality within a church leader's life brings agony to both the church and the community. Cultivate humility.
- Discussion: Why is this trap important to recognize?

Slide 9:   ***Seminar Summary and Post Seminar Survey***
- Jesus: Perfect Example of Servant Leadership
- Deacon SL Origins and SL Qualifications
- Deacon SL Common Practices and SL Responsibilities
- Five Best Practices of the Servant Leader
- Three Formative Traits
- Three Sinful Traps to Avoid as a SL

APPENDIX 3

DEACON SERVANT LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following evaluation will be sent to an expert panel of one theologian, two deacons, one lay minister, and three local church elders (pastors). The rubric was used to evaluate the course material to ensure it is biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Curriculum Evaluation Tool

Name of evaluator: _____ **Date:** _____

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Deacon Servant Leadership Curriculum Evaluation **1 = Insufficient; 2 = Requires attention; 3 = Sufficient; 4 = Exemplary**					
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of servant leadership.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					
Methodology					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses deacon's role as servant leadership					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, and homework.					
Practicality					
The curriculum is clearly relevant to practices of deacon ministry.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to practice servant leadership.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

Table A1. Summative scores of each curriculum evaluator

Evaluator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Total
Elder 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Elder 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Elder 3	4	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	24
Theologian	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	30
Apologist	2	3	4	3	4	2	4	NA	22
Deacon 1	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	31
Deacon 2	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	26
Average	25	27	25	25	26	23	24	21	28

APPENDIX 4

T-TEST RESULTS

Table A2 contains the data analysis for the t-test for dependent samples. Table A3
details the change in pre and post-series scores. The t-test for dependent samples
demonstrated a positive statistical change in the candidate's knowledge of servant
leadership.

Table A2. *t*-test analysis

	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
Mean	65.83333333	78.44444444
Variance	111.441176	18.14379085
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.241139355	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	-5.150880958	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0000400059367	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	8.00119E-05	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table A3. *t*-test results for content knowledge

Trainee	Pre-Training	Post-Training	Increase by Percentage
1	73/84	83/84	12
2	76/84	83/84	9
3	66/84	73/84	8
4	68/84	73/84	6
5	42/84	77/84	42
6	53/84	81/84	33
7	51/84	84/84	39
8	81/84	82/84	1
9	60/84	75/84	18
10	71/84	79/84	9
11	66/84	83/84	20
12	70/84	76/84	16
13	72/84	82/84	12
14	64/84	72/84	10
15	74/84	78/84	5
16	52/84	75/84	27
17	67/84	73/84	7
18	79/84	83/84	5

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ABSTRACT

A CURRICULUM FOR EQUIPPING DEACONS AT FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH KERSHAW, SOUTH CAROLINA
FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
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This project describes and evaluates a ministry project designed to enhance the deacons' ministry, through servant leadership, at First Baptist Church Kershaw. Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context and background of First Baptist Church Kershaw while providing the reasoning for the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological framework for correctly understanding servant leadership in relation to deacon ministry. These biblical constructs determine the curriculum's development. In chapter 3, how clarification of roles and responsibilities within the church are vital to function and practice, and the vital need for a biblically functioning diaconate are explored; servant leadership theory is explored, the trends in deacon practices within the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are examined; and a profile of the five best practices for servant leadership is proposed. Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the project, and details completion dates of each component. Chapter 5 evaluates the overall project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses.

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