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EQUIPPING DEACONS TO BE THE SERVANT LEADERS AT
TANGLEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, ODESSA, TEXAS

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING DEACONS TO BE THE SERVANT LEADERS AT
TANGLEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, ODESSA, TEXAS

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To Donna; my wife, my partner, my gift, and a great student in her own right.
Few know how much she has sacrificed to bring me to this place and all without debt.
Few know how much she has encouraged me when I was stalled or discouraged.

To my Lord Jesus Christ and His grace. That a high school dropout could even finish
college is a testimony to God's enabling grace.

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PREFACE

This project was completed, in part, because of the Christian support of many people. First, I am thankful to my family. My wife has sacrificed financially and temporally for years while I slowly pursued a secondary education. She endured two master's degrees, and now this doctorate. She has never complained and has accompanied me to several classes. Our children have cheered me on since 1996. We have three great sons! I cannot imagine doing this kind of work without the support and approval of my family.

I am thankful for Tabernacle Baptist Church in Crane, Texas, and Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, Texas. Tabernacle patiently supported my pursuit of postgraduate studies. They gave me time to study, time off for classes, and approbation when I needed it. Tanglewood likewise allowed me to study during office hours, travel when the program required, and they cheered me on, especially when I began to feel discouraged. The staff at Tanglewood patiently covered for me while I did school work. What a great group! Thanks also to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The professors, supporting churches, and all the staff were invaluable in this process.

Supportive people are a gift from God. Jesus Christ has been kind to me throughout this journey. He has enabled me, cheered me, and supplied every need along the way. I would so much more prefer living in Christ than existing without him.

Lyndel Lee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to biblically train and equip deacons of Tanglewood Baptist Church, Odessa, Texas, to share in supportive leadership to the senior pastor in both serving and leading the congregation.

Goals

This project was directed by four progressive goals. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge and outlook of the deacon board, then comprised of five serving men toward their roles as servant leaders. This goal was measured by a questionnaire, which was administered to the standing deacon board comprised of five men.¹ This questionnaire assessed the serving deacons' knowledge of the biblical qualifications of a deacon along with biblical principles for servant leadership. This goal was considered successful when all deacons completed the survey thus yielding a clearer picture of the then current knowledge of qualifications for the office of deacon and the biblical principles of servant leadership among the deacon board at Tanglewood Baptist Church.

The second goal was to develop a five-lesson curriculum that would prepare Tanglewood's deacons for servant leadership. The curriculum covered basic qualifications for being a deacon in a New Testament church. It also covered the biblical

¹See appendix 1.

characteristics of servant leadership. Finally, the curriculum addressed practical ways that the deacon can join servant leadership with the position of deacon. This goal was measured by an expert panel comprised of three ministry colleagues that utilized a rubric to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.² This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceed the sufficiency level.

The third goal was to educate the five deacons at Tanglewood to engage in servant leadership. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-lesson questionnaire³ that measured the knowledge of the standing deacon board concerning qualifications for the New Testament deacon and the biblical characteristics of a servant leader. This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test of dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-questionnaire scores.

The fourth goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of the series of lessons on deacon qualifications and servant leadership for weaknesses and to identify any areas that needed to be revised before repeating these lessons to future deacons. These revisions were measured by the expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion meet or exceed the sufficient level.

²See appendix 2.

³See appendix 3.

⁴See appendix 4.

Context

Tanglewood Baptist Church was planted in the 1950s as an old line independent Baptist church in the truest sense. One characteristic of this kind of church was autocratic leadership. For more than sixty years this church functioned under a practical dictatorship headed by the senior pastor. Past deacon committees existed as little more than formalities. Though men were elected by the congregation and placed in office, they served at the pleasure of the senior pastor. Little thought was given to qualifications for these men other than a willingness to support the senior pastor in his vision, to support the church financially, and to carry out the pastor's directions and do what they were told.

I became senior pastor at Tanglewood four and one half years ago. When I arrived, I was puzzled by the selection of men that comprised the deacon board. They did not fit the normal leadership model of men with strong personalities and service ethic one expected to find in a deacon board for a church running more than one hundred in attendance. They had no duties and served no apparent practical purpose other than to hold their titles. At approximately one year of my tenure as pastor the church experienced deep problems caused by two long time families in the church. This time of trouble served to highlight that these men were unable to exercise leadership. They simply wanted me, as senior pastor, to tell them what to do so that they could cooperate. They were passive.

Tanglewood Baptist Church had a deacon board comprised of five men who had no leadership or serving skills. The church grew last year at a rate of 40 percent. At the church's new size, I could still effectively be the shepherd leader for the congregation. However, if the church experienced similar growth in the next year, the congregation would be too large for me to shepherd effectively. As pastor, I needed

some help, the church needed a deacon board that could assist me in shouldering this load on a church-wide basis.

The deacons at Tanglewood had strengths. They were men who were strong in their faith and clean in their lives. They were loyal to the church and to the senior pastor, in that order. They had a love for the people of the church and were willing to be trained to fill their roles better. The people of the church loved them and had confidence in these men. They were elected by the congregation; they were not appointed. They were also teachable. None were selfish with their time. This group of deacons were willing and had the potential for being a strong and sound group of active servant leaders in the church.

There were also weaknesses in the serving deacon board. They were weak as leaders. Except for one man, they had no natural leadership skills and had not been trained to lead. They had been instructed to stay away from any leadership roles or duties. The idea of a deacon taking part in decision making and leading the way toward growth was a foreign concept to them. Though I had discussed the issue of leadership with them during regular deacon meetings they did not have a good, biblical model to follow and they did not know where to start in servant leadership. They needed instruction.

These men had no servant leadership abilities beyond being members of Tanglewood in the normal course of church life. They had not been called on to watch segments of the congregation for growth or signs of struggle. They had not been given responsibilities dealing with attendance, hospital calls, ministering to those who were struggling in their faith, or even assuring that single women had good male models for their children. They had shouldered no duties beyond meeting with the pastor and assisting in administration of the Lord's Supper. Their positions were largely honorary,

which was not to say that these men were to fill the role of pastor to the people of the congregation, however, they should have been a help to the pastoral staff in the above duties.

The deacon board at Tanglewood also had no organization. There was no head deacon and no recording secretary. The men met because and if the pastor called them together. Some never spoke out or offered an opinion on anything, others did so, but cautiously. These good men had little or no knowledge or skills needed to properly fulfill their tasks. As far as they knew, they had no tasks. In a practical way, Tanglewood had no true deacon board.

In this context, I saw a need to encourage, motivate, teach, and then train these men to fill the biblical role of deacon at Tanglewood. They needed to be liberated to serve in their local church context. They needed this spirit of liberty because it was the right thing and the biblical thing to do. They needed also to serve after a biblical model. Their growth in biblical leading was also important because the church vitally needed them as numerical growth continued.

Rationale for the Project

Tanglewood Baptist Church is a growing church. Attendance is steadily increasing, as is membership. People are coming to Christ while others are moving into the area, attracted by jobs created by the oil boom. Many of these new residents are looking for churches to join. Tanglewood is not the only church to reap the benefits of this influx of people. With the increase of people comes increased ministry responsibility. At the beginning of this project we can minister to those in the congregation but in the next year or two of growth the ministry demands would outstrip the staff's ability to properly engage the congregants on a personal basis. We needed

more people involved in the vital work of overseeing and serving the congregation with an eye toward meeting the needs of the people in and associated with the congregation.

To properly serve this congregation we needed a trained and mobilized deacon board. These five men needed to understand their role as deacons and be prepared and equipped to fill that role. We needed men who were both willing and able to serve people, see to the needs of the disadvantaged, needy, hurting, and offer basic spiritual leadership to those who needed counsel and direction in their day-to-day Christian walk. Someone needed to take note and contact members when they were missing from worship. Someone needed to notice and act when they lost their jobs. Someone needed to be there when they were in the hospital or having surgery. We needed to be organized in a way that made sure someone who was capable was there when the pastor could not be.

To fulfill these demands, training was required. The deacons needed to be instructed as to what they must do and to whom they would answer as biblical deacons. They needed to know their responsibilities and limits. Thus, the deacons at Tanglewood needed to be trained in being deacons. Effective ministry in the church demanded it and obedience to Scripture called for it. They were willing and they themselves saw the need for further training, the Bible clearly calls for it, and the times demanded it.

In this context, I saw a need to encourage, motivate, teach, and then train the deacons at Tanglewood to fill their biblical role. It was important that these five men be released to serve those whom they lead. This desire was correct because it was the appropriate thing to do. They needed to do so after a biblical model. It was also vital that they do so because the church needs them as numerical growth continues. Without this advancement in our church's organization, I feared we would fall behind and people would fall away.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Technical terms will be used throughout this paper. These terms are defined below to aid the reading in understanding the subject.

Biblical. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines biblical as “relating to, or in accord with the Bible.”⁵ For the purpose of this paper, biblical will be defined as submitting to the Bible as the authority for both faith and practice. For this project, biblical responsibilities and biblical qualifications for deacons mean that each of these concepts are defined by and subject to the standards of the Bible. Deacons are to look to Scripture for their qualifications and standards.

Deacon. The word *deacon* is found five times in the English New Testament. Per Louw and Nida, the word means “servant.”⁶ When *deacon* is used in the New Testament, it denotes a person serving in a role within a local New Testament Church. For the purpose of this paper, *deacon* will mean a person duly designated to serve in an official capacity in the biblical designated office by the same name within a local New Testament church. As per the title, a deacon is a servant though he occupies a position of leadership.

Servant leader. The *servant leader* is modeled after Jesus’ words in Matthew 20:25-28:

But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’⁷

⁵*Mirriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, “Biblical,” accessed January 13, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/biblical>.

⁶Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

⁷Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

The servant leader leads by setting an example of sacrificial living per the model of Jesus. A servant leader leads by serving the needs of those whom he leads. For this project, a servant leader is defined as one who leads in the spirit of humility, sacrifice and concern for the needs of those whom he leads. The servant-leader leads from within the congregation, not from a superior position.

The two limitations of this study are that, first, it was conducted within the confines of the Tanglewood Baptist Church of Odessa, Texas. This was a local church project. The second limitation was that the training of the deacons of Tanglewood was conducted over a five-week period, comprised of five sessions lasting approximately one hour.

The first delimitation was that this course included training only. There was not any field testing of the effectiveness of this training due to time and space constraints placed on this project. Knowledge was tested, but actions were not evaluated. The second delimitation was that only the standing deacon committee was trained. Prospective deacons and other interested parties were excluded from this study.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included the following instrumentation: an assessment, a pre- and post-course questionnaire and expert panel comprised of three pastors working from an evaluation rubric. Four goals were used to determine the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the then current biblical knowledge of the standing deacon committee at Tanglewood including their views concerning their roles as deacons. This goal would be measured by a questionnaire being administered to the current board comprised of five men. This questionnaire would assess their knowledge of the biblical qualifications for a deacon along with biblical principles for servant leadership. This goal would be deemed successful when all

deacons completed the questionnaire thus yielding a clearer picture of the knowledge of qualifications for the office of deacon and the biblical principles of servant leadership among the deacon board at Tanglewood Baptist Church.

The second goal was to develop a five-lesson curriculum to equip Tanglewood's deacons for servant leadership. This curriculum was administered over a period of five weeks. This curriculum covered biblical qualifications for being a deacon in a New Testament church. It also covered the biblical characteristics of servant leadership. Finally, the curriculum addressed practical ways that the deacon could join servant leadership with his position. This goal was measured by an expert panel of fellow pastors who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The third goal was to train the deacons at Tanglewood to engage in servant leadership. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-questionnaire that measured the knowledge of the serving deacon committee concerning qualifications for the New Testament deacon and the biblical characteristics of a servant leader. This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test of dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson series on deacon qualifications and servant leadership for deficiencies and to identify any areas that required revision before these lessons were administered to future deacons. These revisions were measured by the expert panel of fellow pastors who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the

curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EQUIPPING DEACONS

The New Testament provides a strong foundation for equipping deacons to be servant leaders. This foundation is demonstrated by examining several New Testament texts that deal with deacons and with service among God's people. These texts include Matthew 20:25-28, Mark 10:42-45, John 13:13-17, Acts 6:1-8, 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and Philippians 1:1.

Passages Addressing Deacons by Name

For this study, texts are not addressed in chronological order, rather, texts that use the term *deacon* are addressed first. Other passages that bring to bear on the office of deacon in principle or by example are addressed in a later section.

First Timothy 3:8-13

First Timothy 3:8-13 is one of two passages that use the word *deacon*. This passage is the only Scripture that addresses the qualifications of a person who may occupy what many call the office of deacon. Concerning this list of qualifications, William Mounce writes that the list “is not exhaustive, concentrating as it does on observable traits. It is, rather, an ad hoc list meant to combat the Ephesian heresy; yet in principle it is relevant today.”¹ The important thing to note concerning this passage is,

¹William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Dallas: Word, 2000), 209-12.

per Mounce, this list is not “describing the functions of an office but the type of person who may fulfill that office.”²

Paul gives nine characteristics required in a man who would be a deacon. Five of these characteristics are positive, four are given in the form of prohibitions. Six characteristics are shared with those required in overseers while there are three differences as given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. It is interesting that a deacon is not required to teach, though he is not prohibited from teaching. He is not required to be hospitable, though certainly a hospitable spirit is a good thing. There is also no prohibition against being violent, though Paul would surely not be suggesting that violent people would make good deacons. These differences serve to highlight the differences between the office of overseer and deacon. The overseer leads in a more spiritual sphere while the deacon leads in the more tangible, physical sphere.

Paul begins his list of qualifications in verse 8 with a prospective deacon being dignified. He is to be sober-minded. He is not to be double-tongued. Mounce describes this person as not being a repeater: “Deacons thus must be the type of people who are careful with their tongues, not saying what they should not, being faithful to truth in their speech.”³ Certainly there is some disagreement among Bible believers as to whether the consumption of any alcoholic beverages is ever acceptable, and other texts do come to bear on this subject. The emphasis of Paul’s prohibition in this passage is not so much on the propriety of consuming alcohol as the control of one’s appetites. George W. Knight states, “*Prosecho* has the general meaning of the active voice ‘turn one’s mind to’ and

²Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 209.

³Ibid., 210.

here of ‘occupy oneself with’ or ‘devote oneself to’” (BDAG).⁴ Thus the statement, “not addicted to much wine,” is not addressing a prohibition or lack thereof concerning alcohol.⁵ The qualification stresses that the candidate for deacon must not be controlled by his appetite. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., wisely observed, “You can’t be mastered by both wine and the Spirit, it’s either one or the other.”⁶ The qualification of being “not greedy,” along with the desire for wine, are prohibitions that speak to the deacon being disciplined in controlling his desires.

Paul then writes in verse 9, “They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” Unlike the overseer in verse 2 who must be able to teach the faith, the deacon must personally hold the faith. He must understand the faith to which he subscribes and he must be genuine in his belief. His faith must go beyond his lips to his heart.⁷ Verse 10 says deacons are to be tested. No information exists as to how this test is to be administered; a deacon candidate may be subjected to a formal examination or simply have his life observed. Either way, he must come up blameless in the areas of qualification for the office.

⁴George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 168.

⁵For further discussion on this controversial topic, see National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, “Alcohol and Statistics Fact Sheet,” January 18, 2017, accessed January 22, 2017, <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/alcoholfacts&stats.pdf>; Norman L. Geisler, “To Drink or Not to Drink: A Sober Look at the Question,” April, 2004, accessed January 22, 2017, <https://criswell.files.wordpress.com/2008/04/ctrgeislerformatted.pdf>; and R. A. Baker, “Wine in the Ancient World,” 2007, accessed January 23, 2017, www.churchhistory101.com.

⁶R. Albert Mohler, Jr., ed., *A Guide to Church Revitalization* (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2015), 23.

⁷Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 210.

Verse 12 deals with the deacon and his family. Three qualifications are seen in this verse. First, he is to be a one-woman man. There is some difference of opinion as to the specifics of this requirement. Some students of the Bible hold that this qualification addresses the issue of divorce in the life of the potential deacon.⁸ Most, if not all, interpreters would agree that the deacon must be a faithful husband. Second, he is to manage his children well. He is to be a good father. Third, he is to manage his household well. Managing one's household would address financial and physical aspects of one's home. The point of verse 12 is that a deacon will be responsible for financial and physical matters within the church body. He will not have the credibility needed for this responsibility if he does not have a credible home life.

There is a division of interpretation dealing with the wives of deacons in verse 11. Some scholars hold this verse to address women deacons or deaconesses.⁹ Arguments for this position include (1) the use of "likewise" in a parallel fashion in both verse 8 and verse 11. The assumption being that each likewise introduces a new subject for qualifications. (2) If verse 11 addresses a deacon's wife one would expect there to be some word concerning an overseer's wife. (3) If verse 11 addresses a wife, one would expect some listing of household duties. (4) The office of deaconess is found very early in the history of the New Testament church.¹⁰

⁸For further reading on the issue of deacons and divorce. see Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), #-#.

⁹ For defense of this position, see Charles W. Deweese, *Women Deacons and Deaconesses: 400 Years of Baptist Service* (Brentwood, ST: Baptist History and Heritage Society 2005); and John MacArthur, *Answering Key Questions about Deacons* (Santa Clarita, CA: Masters Seminary, 1985).

¹⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 219-20.

Other scholars hold that the verse addresses the wives of deacons, as most modern versions translate the Greek word used here. Arguments in favor of this interpretation include (1) the requirements, if for a female deacon are considerably lighter than for a male.¹¹ (2) Although it is an argument from silence, there is no clear reference to the deaconess in the New Testament.¹² (3) Because a deacon is more likely to be involved in activities such as in home visitation, it is more likely that his wife would be involved in a deacon's ministry than would the wife of an overseer.¹³ (4) Deacons are addressed on each side of this verse. It seems awkward to discuss deacons in verses 8-10, switch to deaconesses in verse 11, and then return to deacons in verses 12-13. The arguments for a male deaconate, though equal in number, are stronger biblically. The context at Tanglewood also mitigates against a female deaconate. The deacons at Tanglewood serve in a capacity that includes some duties that elders would shoulder should the church have both elders and deacons. This dual structure encourages a male deaconate. The church also has a long-standing history of a male deaconate.¹⁴ For these reasons, the position of verse 11 referring to a deacon's wife is adopted in this project. Certainly, nothing in these requirements would prohibit a woman from serving as a deacon, the tradition and structure at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, places a necessity for taking a position that this passage addresses deacons' wives and not women deacons.

Per verse 11, there are four requirements for a deacon's wife. (1) Like her husband, she must be dignified or sober minded. (2) She must not be a slanderer, which

¹¹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 216.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁴Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 118.

was an apparent problem with the women in the Ephesian church (1 Tim 5:13).¹⁵ The deacon's wife must have control of her speech where fellow believers are concerned. (3) She must be sober minded. Lea and Griffin hold this qualification to address temperance in life. Living a life of moderation and discipline in consumption of food, spending of money, or anything that can be overused or overdone.¹⁶ (4) She is to be faithful in all things. According to Mounce, this statement is a catch-all requirement stressing that the deacon's wife must be trustworthy and faithful in all areas of life.¹⁷ The stress on qualifying a deacon's wife illustrates how important a wife is to the ministry of a deacon. She can be a great help or a great detriment to everything he does as a church servant-leader.

Last, Paul deals with rewards for those who faithfully execute the office of deacon. Verse 13 gives two things a deacon who executes his office well can expect. First, the deacon will gain a good standing for himself. Litfin explains that this good standing is before fellow believers who understand and appreciate the value of humble and Christlike service.¹⁸ Whether the deacon achieves a good standing before only believers or before the entire community where the church functions, people will be favorably impressed with a good deacon's service. Second, he will gain a great confidence in the faith that is in Christ. This blessing addresses the deacon's own person rather than his reputation. He will personally gain confidence in his faith, which may be

¹⁵Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 218.

¹⁶Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 119.

¹⁷Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 219.

¹⁸A. Duane Litfin, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 737.

due to seeing God work in the lives of those whom he serves. Paul is careful to inform the readers that there is a reward; there are blessings associated with serving.

In summation, Paul was concerned in this passage that deacons have credibility as family men and as believers. If they are going to serve, they must do so from a position of reliable, sound, genuine, and humble men. Their families must be in order and their wives must demonstrate the same character their husband's exhibit. A church is a family unit made up of family units. Those who hold positions of respect must have credible family lives. It requires more than a desire or a strong acumen with money to qualify as a local church deacon.

Philippians 1:1

The second passage addressing deacons by name is Philippians 1:1. This verse is a part of Paul's greeting to the church at Philippi. Though several aspects of this verse may be of interest to many Bible students, this section's focus is on Paul's use of the word "deacon." Aside from 1 Timothy 3, Philippians 1:1 is the only other passage in the Bible to use the word *deacon* when referring to the office or the man serving in the office. It is generally accepted that this letter was written by Paul from Rome in approximately 60AD. Thus, the text gives a small window into middle first-century church life and governmental structure.

Though this passage is short, several observations can be made based on a careful reading. First, this text is a local church passage. Peter Thomas O'Brien says that though the word church does not appear in the verse, "too much weight ought not to be placed on this since it is omitted from the prescripts of Romans, Ephesians, and

Colossians and in each of these instances saints occurs instead.”¹⁹ Paul is not addressing Christian servants in general in this passage, he is addressing a church.

Second, deacons, along with overseers, were official titles and offices within this local church body. However, Hawthorne concedes that this passage could be translated as “‘bishops who are deacons’ or ‘overseers who serve.’”²⁰ However, most conservative scholars generally accept the meaning of this phrase to be the naming of two separate offices. Martin states that the word “deacon” as used in Philippians 1:1 speaks of “a person who had certain administrative tasks in the church.”²¹ Philippians 1:1 demonstrates that at least some churches under the apostle Paul’s supervision had men serving in an official capacity as deacons.

Third, several things may be observed concerning deacons in this one verse. First, Hawthorne explains, “Paul mentions overseers and deacons in such a way as to distinguish them from the congregation”²² Church officers, not mere members, exhibited certain characteristics. Second, Paul did not address himself to these “officers” as being over the heads of the congregation.”²³ The overseers and deacons were officers of the church, but they were not a class unto themselves apart from and above the congregation. Third, Paul addresses both the overseers and deacons in the plural. Hawthorne explains,

¹⁹Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 45.

²⁰Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Dallas: Word, 2004), 11.

²¹Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987), 61.

²²Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 9.

²³Ibid.

“This means at least that at the time Paul wrote there was no single chief officer (overseer or bishop) with his assistant (deacon) at Philippi.”²⁴

Philippians 1:1 indicates that the term “deacon” was in use some thirty years after the events recorded in Acts 6. Deacons were serving in plural numbers in the one church where they are biblically named. They were also serving in an official capacity, not simply as members who exhibited a spirit of service.

Biblical Material Thought to Address Deacons

Some material in the New Testament does not address the person or office of deacon by title, though the following passages either are deemed to address deacons in substance or they deal with issues that directly relate to deacons. These texts must be addressed in considering both the men and the office of deacon.

Acts 6:1-8

While not using the term, the seminal passage of Scripture thought to address deacons is Acts 6:1-8. This passage is not only used to justify the modern office of deacon, but addresses duties, either proper or improper, for those who hold this office.

Two things led to the actions recorded in this passage. First, there was an increase in the number of disciples in the church at Jerusalem. Polhill writes,

From latter data in Acts it may be concluded that this incident took place in the early to mid-thirties, perhaps five years or so after Pentecost. . . . We may assume that at this point the Christian community consisted exclusively of Jews. The only exceptions would be the “proselytes.”²⁵

This text suggests that the number of believers in this first church were many, organization was strained, and new challenges would be rising from the sheer numbers of

²⁴Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 9.

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

believers in the local church body.

Second, though it is possible and even likely that at least several challenges were associated with the sizable membership at this first church, the text tells of one challenge. A complaint was lodged by the Hellenist Jews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of physical necessities. This was likely no small problem. Polhill explains, “The Hellenist widows may have been a particularly sizable group. Dispora Jews often moved to Jerusalem in their twilight years to die in the holy city. When men died their widows were left far from their homes and families to care for them”²⁶ This neglect could have been due to mere cultural barriers between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, or there could have been a language barrier.²⁷ Whatever the cause, there was conflict and a division was occurring in a church known for being a bastion of unity.

The apostles moved quickly to offer a solution to this problem in verses 3-4. They did not think it appropriate that they leave their spiritual calling to attend to fiscal and physical matters. I. Howard Marshall writes, “It is not necessarily suggested that *servicing tables* is on a lower level than prayer and teaching; the point is rather that the task to which the Twelve had been specifically called was one of witness and evangelism.”²⁸ John Peter Lange et al., clarifies,

They propose that an office should be created, bearing a distinct and independent character, or one to which specific duties should be assigned. . . . They ask the church to select and propose suitable persons, to whom they, the apostles, might assign that office.²⁹

²⁶Polhill, *Acts*, 179.

²⁷I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 133, emphasis original.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹John Peter Lange et al., *Acts: A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Harrington, DE: Delmarva; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 103-4.

Per verse 5, the whole congregation was pleased with this proposal and seven men, all of whom bore Hellenistic names, were selected for this new office.

The qualifications for this new office were simple and leaned toward good common sense. The apostles asked that the men selected be full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom. Being filled with the Holy Spirit meant these were godly men who walked with their Savior. Though they were given a physical task, they were dealing with spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. There is a spiritual dimension to everything a New Testament church does. Being filled with wisdom meant they would have a reputation for making sound decisions and using their knowledge well. Distributing money and food to needy people called for life experience. These seven men were “men of acknowledged integrity of character and purity of life, men of good repute.”³⁰

The men were selected by the congregation and presented to the apostles (vv. 6-7). The apostles commissioned these men for the work for which they were selected, and according to verse 7, the Word of God spread and many people came to Christ. The division was healed, the controversy was settled, and a Christian spirit was exhibited throughout the entire episode.

The question naturally arises, were the seven men appointed to tend to the needy widows in Acts 6 in fact deacons? Polhill points out,

Often the present passage is seen to be the initiation of the diaconate. The word “deacon” never occurs in the passage. The word “ministry” does occur several times but it is applied to both the ministry of the daily distribution (vs 2) and the ministry of the word, the apostolic witness (vs 4). In fact, the word “deacon” never occurs in Acts.³¹

³⁰Lange et al., *Acts*, 104.

³¹Polhill, *Acts*, 181.

Marshall writes, “Their task had no formal name.”³² Lea and Griffin suggest, “Since the ‘seven’ ministered in a manner similar to deacons, it is perhaps best to regard these men as forerunners in performing a task the deacons later assumed.”³³ Mounce explains, “This lack of definition probably indicates the embryonic state of the diaconate.”³⁴ It is theologically safe to say that though the task given to these men was similar to that of the deacons addressed in 1 Timothy 3 and Philippians 1, there is no solid ground to insist that these seven men were indeed not deacons. However, the lack of formal name and the difference between qualifications laid out in Acts 6, as opposed to 1 Timothy 3, mitigate against these men being confidently termed as the first church deacons.

Certainly, one may take a variety of lessons from this passage. First, a church that is moving forward with God should expect problems and challenges. The entire episode recorded in Acts 6:1-7 revolves around a divisive issue within the Jerusalem church. This church was growing and God was blessing their ministry. It may also be noted that the problem facing this church was internal, not external. For a church to expect ministry to go smoothly simply because she is in God’s will is unreasonable. There would be no need for solutions were there no problems. Problems are endemic to dedicated ministry.

Second, churches may create ministries or develop solutions to meet needs and solve problems. Whether these seven men were deacons or not, their ministries were created by a local church to meet a pressing need; they were the solution to a problem. Church history has demonstrated that different times, different cultures, and different

³²Marshall, *Acts*, 133.

³³Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 114.

³⁴Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 210.

circumstances call for creative solutions to often unexpected problems. The seven men were not appointed in response to a work of prophecy or any new revelation; they were appointed because of a suggestion made by the Twelve and the response of the congregation. Churches should not be locked into ministries that do not meet local needs. Churches should also not hesitate to define a ministry according to the times and circumstances that are pressing on the church providing these ministries remain within biblically stated boundaries.

Third, leadership is wise to include the congregation in the process of solving problems. Polhill points out, “It is important to note that the congregation had a part in ratifying the selection made by the apostles. The apostles assumed the leadership in making the proposal and selecting the seven men who were to serve.”³⁵ It may be safe to say that part of the reason for the success in healing the breach and solving the problem was that everyone had a hand in the solution. People will more likely take ownership in things of which they are a part. The Twelve showed great administrative wisdom not only in their proposal, but in how they implemented it.

Passages Dealing with Servanthood in Leaders

Though Matthew 20:25-28, Mark 10:42-45, and John 13:13-17 deal with servanthood in those who lead, two of the passages are companion accounts. Therefore, this section focuses on the three passages as two. The companion passages are Matthew 20:25-28 and Mark 10:42-45, which record the same incident in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ as He led and trained his disciples.

The background of Matthew 20:25-28 and Mark 10:42-45 is Jesus and the twelve traveling toward Jerusalem where Jesus would experience His passion. As they

³⁵Polhill, *Acts*, 180.

were nearing the city, Jesus told the twelve, not for the first time, of the events that would transpire while they were in the city. It was important that the twelve would later remember that the things which were to occur were not random or accidental, but were the fulfillment of divine prophecy. It was on the heels of this pronouncement that the mother of James and John approached Jesus with a request. Jesus graciously gave her a hearing. The request was that her sons would have chief seats in the government Jesus would set up in his visible kingdom. Bear in mind that the twelve were expecting this kingdom to be established during Jesus' lifetime. Per Donald Hagner, this was a natural and acceptable request if one took the perspective of human fallenness. This view was that the greatest good was that which serves self and is the perspective that dominates pagans of the world and its rulers.³⁶ This request afforded Jesus a great teaching opportunity. Much of what Jesus taught the twelve was occasional; principles were shared and truths were taught as occasions of life brought them into view. This request occasioned a teaching opportunity.

Jesus taught this principle to govern the children of God throughout the coming days and years, leading up to his visible second coming. Though Jesus did not rebuke his disciples, he certainly did issue them a challenge.³⁷ Craig Evans writes, "Greatness in Jesus' day was defined as power, coercive power. The more power one had, the 'greater' one was."³⁸ The twelve were aspiring to greatness and thus longed for positions of power where they could bend other people to their will. This view of

³⁶Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1998), 583-84.

³⁷Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 34B (Dallas: Word, 2001), 125.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 118.

leadership is the model with which they had been raised and in which had been trained. Evans explains, “What Jesus commands his disciples could not possibly be more at odds with conventional wisdom.”³⁹ R. T. France clarifies that in Jesus’ instruction “the natural expectations of society are reversed, and leadership is characterized by service, by being under the authority of others, like a servant or a slave.”⁴⁰ According to Leon Morris, “It is lowliness, not self-assertion, that is important in the kingdom.”⁴¹ Greatness in God’s kingdom was thus paradoxical in nature.⁴² To seek greatness was to miss it and to be really great in God’s kingdom was to be humble and lowly.

Jesus’ first assertion was that those who will be great are those who serve. The Greek word used here *diakonos* interestingly originally spoke to serving tables, which is exactly the job the seven in Acts 6 were appointed to do. Jesus told his twelve that they must serve if they would be counted as great in His kingdom. Morris adds, “Jesus takes that to the limit by saying that the one who *wills to be first* in the brotherhood *will be your slave*. In the ancient world, there was no one lower than a slave.”⁴³ This was a counter cultural lesson to the twelve as well as it is to believers today. In no human organization is greatness seen in debasing oneself and bending one’s will to another’s. This world system does not anticipate the meek inheriting this earth, so how were the

³⁹Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 118.

⁴⁰R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 420.

⁴¹Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 511.

⁴²Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 581.

⁴³Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 511.

twelve to understand greatness considering Jesus' teaching and how should twenty-first century believers view greatness in the confines of a New Testament church?

Jesus gave the twelve an example to help them understand the principle he had just taught them to answer these questions. Evans remarks that, "the supreme example of this service is seen in Jesus himself."⁴⁴ Manilio Simonetti concurs, "If you want proof that I speak truly, look at what I am doing. Look at what I do and suffer. Let the proof of my teaching be my life."⁴⁵ Additionally, John Nolland writes, "Jesus exhibits his exalted status precisely in taking up a serving role . . . the Son of Man exhibits his preeminence precisely by giving service rather than by receiving service."⁴⁶ The best summation of this principle taught by Jesus is found in Philippians 2:5-11 where Jesus, though God, humbled himself and became a servant. Because of his service and obedience, God has exalted him highly. In this passage Paul explains that Jesus is great because he became a servant.

These companion passages teach that though men see greatness in bending the will of others to one's own, God sees greatness in terms of submission and service. Also, in due time God will reward a spirit of service by exalting those who faithfully serve. This principle is countercultural and will not be achieved by human reason. This truth is given by special revelation from God. Jesus' instructions to the twelve show that the office of deacon is honorable if it is carried on, not from a position of power, but from a position of submission.

⁴⁴Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 125.

⁴⁵Manilio Simonetti, *Matthew 14-28*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2001), 117

⁴⁶John Nolland, preface to *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 23.

The final passage dealing with servanthood in those who lead is John 13:12-17. The examination of this passage is limited to the context of the event recorded, principles of servanthood illustrated, and lessons to be learned as they apply to serving leaders in a Christian atmosphere. Though many things can be examined in this passage, space and the purpose of this paper limit the focus in this instance.

The context of this passage can be found in the first eleven verses of John 13. The Passover supper had ended and Jesus did something totally unexpected; He rose from his reclining position, took linen cloth and wrapped it around himself as a half apron, and proceeded to wash the feet of the twelve. Washing feet was an exceedingly humble job. Rodney Whitacre explains,

A Jewish text says this is something a Gentile slave could be required to do, but not a Jewish slave (*Mekilta* on Ex 21:2, citing Lev 25:39, 46). . . . It would have been appropriate for one of the disciples to have washed Jesus' feet, but the reverse is intolerable.⁴⁷

Though all the apostles probably incredulous, no one but Peter objected to Jesus' actions. Peter essentially asked Jesus in verse 8 what he thought he was doing and then insisted that Jesus would not be allowed to wash his feet. Jesus admittedly gave Peter a vague answer in verse 9. In response to Jesus, Peter went to the opposite extreme and insisted that he be given a more thorough bath by Jesus. Whitacre writes, "Peter at this point is an example of religious enthusiasm that is really a manifestation of the unregenerate self rather than of genuine discipleship."⁴⁸ Jesus assured Peter that the feet were all that required washing in verse 10 and made a clouded reference to Judas. These events form the context of the lesson Jesus taught in verses 12-17. At this point the

⁴⁷Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, The IVP New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 328.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

twelve are admittedly confused and probably emotionally stirred, and in this atmosphere Jesus moved into the lesson.

As verse 12 opens, Jesus began to explain the implications of his actions. He started with what they knew, moved to what they saw, and then arrived at what his actions were teaching. Everyone in the room knew that greatness was seen in one's ability to bend others to one's own will. Those who were great exercised power over others and used others as means to achieve their own aims. What the twelve saw, thus, was out of harmony with what they knew. Jesus asked if they understood what he had just done for them in verse 12. Of course, they did not understand. Whitacre states, "They will not completely understand until they have seen the cross (v.7), but they can at least grasp his act as an example of humility."⁴⁹ Jesus continued, in verse 13, by stating that he was called both Teacher and Lord. He agreed that both titles were indeed appropriate for his relationship with the apostles. Whitacre explains, "While they were reeling from this embarrassing event, Jesus spells out the implications for their own lives."⁵⁰ These men were apostles, sent ones. The lesson was that "Jesus is the one sent by the Father, and the disciples will be sent by Jesus. Jesus has been submissive to the Father, and the disciples are to be under the authority of Jesus."⁵¹ Kenneth Gangel opines, "Perhaps there exists no act more menial than washing another's feet, but nothing is beneath a disciple."⁵² If they were to truly be the sent ones of Jesus Christ, they would

⁴⁹Whitacre, *John*, 329.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 330.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 251.

necessarily emulate him in service to one another. Truly, greatness will be found in their spirit of humble service.

Jesus said in John 5:19 that he did nothing of his own will but only the things he saw the Father doing, and “this footwashing is not said to be an exception to that rule. . . . This is what God himself is like.”⁵³ Jesus was not teaching abstract theological tenets here but practical principles. Kenneth Gangel explains, “Here we are not focused on some great spiritual reality or doctrinal truth; the passage deals with how we treat other people.”⁵⁴ Gerald Borchert agrees, “Jesus’ disciples cannot treat humility as merely a nice idea that is unrelated to Christian life.”⁵⁵ Whitacre expounds,

The community Jesus has brought into being is to manifest the love of God that he has revealed through serving one another with no vestige of pride or position. There will be recognized positions of leadership within the new community, but the exercise of leadership is to follow this model of servanthood. . . . The community that Jesus has been forming here takes more definite shape, revealing more clearly “the law of its being” which is humble, self-sacrificing love.⁵⁶

Though no church or spiritual office is in view here, the principle of humble service is pan-Christian. Those who lead and exercise authority over others must do so in the spirit of a servant. It must be benevolent leadership in the truest sense. There is no room in a New Testament church for a leader who longs to lord himself over God’s people.

Conclusion

The office of deacon is biblical. At least some churches in the first century included deacons in their church polity though there is no evidence that all churches included deacons. This office was considered honorable when honorably held and

⁵³Whitacre, *John*, 328.

⁵⁴Gangel, *John*, 251.

⁵⁵Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 85.

⁵⁶Whitacre, *John*, 330-31.

executed by those who bore the position and the service these men performed was respected by fellow believers. Men who would serve in the capacity of deacon were to be men of good character both publicly and privately, they were also to have credible home lives and servant's hearts. Not just anyone who had the desire to be a deacon could biblically serve, though the desire to serve was an honorable thing. There were specific qualifications to anyone who would hold the position and biblical parameters for the men who could serve as deacons and the kind of service they were to perform. These qualifications were not ideals; they were firm requirements. If churches are to have people serving in the capacity of a deacon, these churches must take care that the service these men perform falls within the biblical parameters set forth in Scripture. The office of deacon is not open to redefinition and sweeping change. When conducted in a biblical fashion, the deacons of a church are to be viewed as honorable men who shoulder honorable and necessary duties. These men are worthy of respect and they set good examples that should be followed by other members of the congregations where they serve. From a biblical perspective, deacons are a vital part of New Testament church structure and their presence, when biblically functional, bolsters the effectiveness of any church's ministry and mutual care. Deacons are more than men who hold honorary titles and wield power over the pastors or members of a local congregation; they are servants who lead by serving. Though this principle sounds like an oxymoron in some circles, it is the way the Bible describes it and how God will have it. First Corinthians 1:27 is appropriate: "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."

CHAPTER 3
PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATING TO TRAINING
DEACONS AS SERVANT LEADERS

This chapter addresses several issues not addressed in biblical passages dealing with deacons and leadership. In twenty-first century America, pressures and societal influences come to bear on churches, especially where leadership is concerned. Questions should be answered in a modern and relevant context. This chapter is not suggesting that Scripture is not relevant to the modern mind. Certainly 2 Timothy 3:16 is still valid when it states, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Still some questions are asked which are not addressed in the Bible. Some issues are faced by twenty-first century American churches, which are unique in their context. These issues should be faced. As these questions are addressed, it should be borne in mind that the Bible is the final authority. No answer or explanation that contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture may be deemed correct in a conservative, evangelical Christian church setting.

Conflict with the Secular World’s View of Leadership

The Bible makes it clear concerning what may be considered a biblical view of leadership, Jesus said in Matthew 20:25-28,

But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Matthew's companion passage is Mark 10:42-45:

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

As was discussed in chapter 2, these passages set forth servant leadership in the biblical fashion. According to Jesus, Christian leadership is not characterized by one forcing or imposing his or her will on others. Christian leadership is leading by serving. This leadership is sometimes called incarnational leadership. The leader takes the form of the follower and stands alongside the follower in order to lead from within the group or from the arena from which followers act. One may not accurately claim that Christian leadership has always reflected this model, but it has always been the model God espoused.

David Platt writes, "The fruit of following Jesus is a new heart and a new mind, new desires, a new will, a new way of relating to people around you, and a new purpose."¹ The Bible makes it plain that believers in Jesus Christ are to be different than those who do not believe. Christians and churches are to be more than subcultural; churches are to be countercultural. They are not to be reflections of the world and its systems, they are to be biblical reflections of Jesus Christ and conduct themselves per His principles and instructions. Logic follows that this difference would extend even into leadership among believers, in churches comprised of believers, and also into parachurch organizations. According to Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 7:13-14, believers travel a different life path than nonbelievers. Though believers live in this present world, it is a reasonable expectation for Christians to *be* different and thus do things differently from

¹David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call To Die, A Call To Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 73.

what the unbelieving world is and does. The differences between Christian organizations and churches are not to simply be different, but biblically, blessedly different.

Unbelievers must see Christ working in us, even in how we organize and lead.

Warren Bennis states, “In times past, leadership was seen in those who could exercise dominance over others, men like Julius Caesar, Martin Luther, Niccolo Machiavelli, and James Madison.”² These strong-willed men could bend others to their way of thinking and doing things; to impose their wills on other people and motivate them to follow by the sheer force of their personalities. For centuries, this model has been recognized as effective leadership. Few people would doubt that this model of leadership has been effective in getting things done. If productivity and uniformity are the goals, top down leadership is a valid approach to successful organizations.

The question facing the student of modern leadership in the Western culture is, does the Bennis' definition of leadership still stand as valid today? Does society still look to domineering and dominating people as its foremost and most desirable examples of leadership? Are people, especially twenty-first century Americans, still motivated by those who would bend them to their own will and master them through brute strength of presence?

According to Edmund P. Clowney,

It is easy to find in secularism the greatest obstacle to the Christian mission in our time . . . its triumph in the West has effected the mission of the church worldwide . . . while missionaries of the Christian West have gone to the ends of the earth, the homelands of the mission have been progressively de-Christianized.³

²Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 4.

³Edmund P. Clowney, “Secularism and the Christian Mission,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 21 (1958): 18-21.

As early as 1950, scholars and researchers were seeing the impact secular society was having on the Christian community at large. Does this influence extend to leadership in Christian circles? Are churches to be mirror images of secular society where leadership is concerned? Are Christians to be pragmatists who simply look for a formula that produces desired results? Is there more to leadership?

Some proponents of the Christian model of leadership are making inroads in the secular world. Though these men and women are believers in Jesus Christ, they are being read by and are conducting training workshops in the secular arena. Pat MacMillan asserts,

Leaders who must rely on positional authority and autocratic style to achieve their ends seldom see the levels of performance shown to leaders who see their role as one of service and support. This concept is so important that it bears repeating: Teams are, in the very truest of terms, volunteers. Volunteers are not “managed” but demand leadership capable of calling out the levels of initiative and creativity that motivate exceptional levels of both individual and collective performance⁴

Though MacMillan is a Christian, this citation is not from a book written to Christians. MacMillan is a highly sought after consultant on secular leadership and team building both in the US and Latin America. Patrick Lencioni would agree with MacMillan:

The most important action that a leader must take to encourage the building of trust on a team is to demonstrate vulnerability first. This requires that a leader risk losing face in front of the team, so that subordinates will take the same risk themselves. What is more, team leaders must create an environment that does not punish vulnerability. Even well-intentioned teams can subtly discourage trust by chastising one another for admissions of weakness or failure. Finally, displays of vulnerability on the part of a team leader must be genuine; they cannot be staged. One of the best ways to lose the trust of a team is to feign vulnerability in order to manipulate the emotions of others.⁵

As with MacMillan, Lencioni did not write to the Christian reader. He is also a respected consultant dealing with secular leadership and teamwork. Both men see

⁴Pat MacMillan, *The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secret of Teamwork* (Nashville: B & H, 2001), 97.

⁵Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 201.

leadership in terms of being one of the group, one of the guys. They have moved away from the dominant personality model. Though writing to a secular audience, both MacMillan and Lencoini promote incarnational leadership in secular settings. In many ways, this leadership model mirrors the model of leadership set forth by Jesus Christ in Matthew 20:25-28

From what has been seen, one may arrive at two conclusions. First, there is a secular worldview where leadership is concerned. There are more secular books on leadership than could be easily counted. Teaching leadership, consulting on leadership, and writing about leadership is big business among those who are not followers of Jesus Christ. These experts take well-defined positions and have well laid out strategies where leaders and leadership are concerned. The experts set forth models of leadership that work. It is not difficult to determine what their philosophies are and why they take the positions they do.

Second, the most recent secular view of successful and effective leadership is remarkably like the model given by Jesus Christ. These secular views have not always agreed with Jesus' model of leadership, but the past few decades have seen a turn in philosophy from authority based on position and dominant personality to authority given to the leader by the group of followers because of identity and example. In many issues, the secular world's philosophies and positions are much different from all things Christian. Often the world system takes up positions that are openly hostile to those of Christianity. Where leadership is concerned, this hostility is not evident. The secular world is learning that Jesus had it right and they are, perhaps, unwittingly following his lead in this vital area. One may safely say the secular world's view of leadership is remarkably compatible, if not highly similar, to the view expressed by Jesus Christ in Matthew 20 and Mark 10.

Are Watch-Care Principles Better Suited for Elders or Do They Apply to Active Deacons?

What are watch-care principles? One must not confuse the watch-care work of deacons with programs in some local churches where members of other churches are taken into local congregations and given certain privileges and services of membership without becoming full members and without moving membership from their original churches. For the purpose of this paper, deacon watch-care in the local congregation is a twofold ministry. First, watch-care is a ministry of watching. Those charged in the watch-care ministry are to watch or observe those under their charge. They are to watch for physical and spiritual needs. They are to watch for any apparent struggles—physical or spiritual. They are to watch for crises in the lives of those whom they have been assigned to care for. They are even to keep watch for open sin that could bring shame to the church body and damage to the lives of those under their watch. Watching is not meant to be a legalistic, harsh duty designed to humble those under one's care. The deacon is not to serve as the sin police or to in any way instill fear in the lives of congregants. The deacon is to serve in a spirit of love and concern for his charges. In summation, those in the watch-care ministry are to lovingly observe those over whom they are given responsibility to discover and determine needs and lackings, both spiritual and temporal.

Second, those in the watch-care ministry are to act proactively in exercising care where both the spiritual and temporal needs of those whom they watch are concerned. This care may include spiritual counsel and/or spiritual intervention. This care may also include financial assistance, help with housing or repair on housing for those in need, or any other temporal supply for those who lack temporal, physical care. This care may involve helping a single mother with her children or aiding an unemployed member find employment. In short, those charged with watch-care must be careful to

watch those assigned to them and then move to lovingly administer care to those same people, whether this care be spiritual or temporal. If the needs are greater than the one who is assigned watch-care can administer, then recommendations may need to be made to lead elders, the deacon board or the church body for further action, discipline, or service. The watch-care ministry makes sure there is someone in place to be a point of contact for members of the local congregation and thus lessen the likelihood of unmet needs and unseen issues in the lives of the local church members.

With watching and caring parameters in mind, the question remains, is this ministry scripturally appropriate for serving deacons? Should watch-care ministry more appropriately be in the hands of church elders? Are the deacons to labor only in the temporal sphere?

Certainly, biblical scholars hold positions on latitude in defining the duties assigned to deacons that vary. Some scholars give churches great latitude in assigning duties to the office while others insist on a strictly biblically defined roles and responsibilities. A. Boyd Luter, Jr., writes,

Even though we possibly may call the “Magnificent Seven” of Acts 6:1-6 “proto-deacons”, the technical use of the word is not encountered until Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:9-13 in the early 60’s A.D. So, it is even possible that the prevailing form of polity in the earliest decades of the church was ‘elders only.’ It is quite probable that both approaches existed side-by-side from mid-century on, flexibly dependent on the duration or size of the church in question. To sum up: the relevant New Testament passages strongly imply that, as a local church grew and matured, its form of government would naturally ‘flex’ to meet increased needs.⁶

If Luter is correct, then the question of propriety in deacons exercising watch-care ministries is moot. Churches have every right to redefine duties, even offices, to meet present needs, provided these duties do not go beyond scriptural paradigms. Deacons are what the church says they are and their duties are what the church biblically assigns. In

⁶Boyd A. Luter, Jr., “Early Church Government: Specifics and Implications,” *Michigan Theological Journal* 2 (1991): 131.

the absence of multiple elders, deacons may then labor in the spiritual arena. As Luter illustrates, certainly there are advocates of this position.

On the other hand, some scholars are advocates of a stricter biblical position. This position holds that deacons are only appropriately to do things named or assigned in Scripture. This position holds also that one must identify a biblical mandate for any activity, especially spiritual, and for any office in a local church setting. For those who hold this position, the question of appropriate duties for a deacon are important. Can a deacon biblically be given watch-care responsibilities? If watch-care activities are appropriate, is it biblical for deacons to go beyond feeding and caring for the poor widows of the congregation and possibly watching after other temporal needs of widows? This question is not insignificant and must be addressed in an American, Western world context.

This question is not a recent one for strict biblicists. George S. Mott addressed this question in the late 1800s, showing that this issue was of interest more than 100 years ago: “The office of deacon . . . is the only office of the Church of which we have the origin and the cause.”⁷ Mott continues,

Spiritual care necessarily was connected with the temporal relief, for our religion ever turns poverty and afflictions into occasions of leading souls to the Source of all comfort. Hence at that time, men were appointed to the office, who were well known for their faith and piety. And Paul, in his enumeration of the qualifications required, makes them nearly the same as those expected of elders, excepting the ability to teach and rule. An efficient deacon is the peer of the godly elder.⁸

Mott ably points out that there is no prohibition against deacons dealing with people in the spiritual realm. Though the qualifications given for a deacon do not include a job description, these qualifications do give the student some hints. Deacons are to be spiritual men. The first deacons, or proto-deacons in Acts 6, were to be men filled with

⁷George S. Mott, “The Deacon,” *The Presbyterian Review* 7 (1886): 462.

⁸Ibid.

the Holy Spirit. Who better qualified to address spiritual issues in the lives of church members than spiritual men who are aware of and involved in the lives of the members of the church? Though these men are not required to teach, they are not prohibited from teaching. In other words, they are not prohibited from laboring in a spiritual realm. They most certainly may be encouraged to counsel in a non-public setting. These statements are strictly biblical.

Two things may then be stated in response to the question of appropriateness of deacons doing watch-care work or whether this work would be better done by elders. First, deacons are not prohibited from doing this work. For those students of Scripture who see offices and duties within the local church as flexible and evolving, there is simply no conflict. Each church may address needs as the local congregation sees fit. In absence of the Bible specifically stating that deacons are to refrain from watch-care work, they are free to pursue this avenue of ministry. For churches who have a division of elders and deacons, this question is simpler. Elders can administer to the spiritual man while deacons help with physical needs.

Second, the strict biblicist will find neither a prohibition against deacons serving in and administering watch-care ministry nor any mitigating Scripture that would suggest this work is in any way inappropriate for local church deacons. Deacons were to be godly men working in godly capacities. Dividing the temporal from the eternal cannot be effectively or easily done when dealing with God's people. Christians are whole people who are temporally both affected by the eternal and spiritually affected by the physical; the temporal and spiritual are interrelated. Studied believers can consequently understand why Howard L. Bixby wrote, when addressing the office of deacon, "They were given a ministry of serving, encouraging, and ministering in physical and spiritual ways. They are referred to as distinct from elder/pastor/bishops in Philippians 1:1 and

were godly men who linked arms with the elder/pastor in the NT church.”⁹ Deacons complemented the work of elders.

The Influence of Modern Western Attitudes on the Deacon's Role

Sometime in the past fifty to sixty years, there has been a shift in Western views toward authority. At one time in America most people invested their entire productive working lives with one company. America once experienced a moral climate where divorce was rare and scandalous. There was an age when institutions were respected, even revered, rarely questioned. There also existed a time when people were respected because of the office they held; the title they were given. Respect was a person's to lose rather than something to be earned. If the people were not personally respected or were deemed worthy of respect, the office often was. People followed because the person over them was in charge, and following was the right thing to do. People beyond the age of fifty remember these days though often dimly, and they lived through the times when these markers in Western society changed. It does not take research to observe that Americans are increasingly mobile in their careers. They commonly do not stay married to one mate for their lifetimes, certainly large institutions are almost automatically suspected and mistrusted, and respect for authority is no longer easily given, it must be earned with difficulty while it can be easily lost. Questioning and even defying authority has become a respected trait in modern Western society where people are encouraged to develop and hold to their own values.

David R. Liefeld holds that this shift began in earnest in 1960s America. He asserts this position by citing Robert Goldberg, “Surveying the impact on America of

⁹Howard L. Bixby, “What Is an Elder?” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 9, no. 2 (2005): 6.

President Kennedy's assassination, Viet Nam, and the Watergate scandals, Goldberg describes a profound shift in American attitudes toward authority."¹⁰ According to Goldberg and Liefeld, a societal shift occurred during the North American decade of the 1960s that brought on a change in the common person's views toward authority in general along with a mistrust of government and large organizations. American confidence in the integrity of their leaders, and thus the trustworthiness of their government, was effectively shaken. One may add to this perception that large businesses and organizations were hand in hand where this deception and scandal were concerned. In the secular world, people determined that corporate entities could not be trusted.

Churches and Christian organizations were slow to recognize this change. Pastors often clung to their authority and expected obedience. Boards enjoyed ruling and strict obedience was expected. Though this model was not a biblical model of leadership, it was a historic one and history held sway. Kenneth O. Gangel states,

The deficiency among contemporary Christians in grasping a clear, distinctive New Testament model of servant leadership seems widespread and glaring. How did the picture become so distorted? Too many pastors, presidents, and principals have bought into an autocratic model of leadership that is old covenant in theology, political in style, and outdated even in current secular literature. The fact that it sometimes works cannot overcome the reality of its incontrovertible opposition to the New Testament. More people are hurt in churches by oppressive leadership styles than by inadequate salaries and ramshackle buildings.

The melody of shared leadership rings through almost all contemporary secular literature on leadership. "The traditional standards of leadership that may have been acceptable in the past will not lead to success in the future. The leader of the community of the future will face much greater challenges in retaining members. The leader's success in adapting to the new world of the community of choice will be a huge factor in determining the community's success in long-term prosperity."¹¹

¹⁰David R. Liefeld, "God's Word or Male Words? Postmodern Conspiracy Culture and Feminist Myths of Christian Origins," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005): 465-66.

¹¹Kenneth O. Gangel, "Marks of a Healthy Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 476.

Gangel recognizes what many other observant people have witnessed—churches have been resistant to moving away from this antiquated, unbiblical model of leadership in favor of the more effective, biblical model of servant leadership set forward to Jesus Christ himself.

As has been demonstrated, secular trends and attitudes eventually find their way into the Christian community. People brought their cynicism of leadership and organizations into churches where they were to be loyal to the organization and trust their leaders. Orrin D. Morris writes,

Associations and churches are also faced with another social factor, changes in leadership styles and a declining confidence in institutions. Pollsters have provided abundant information on the down-turn in public opinion regarding large corporations, government officials, religious leaders, educators, lawyers, doctors, etc. Confidence in organized religion is very low among the unchurched.¹²

One may expect tensions to develop. Add to the secular issues and scandals the extreme public failures of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart in the 1970s, along with the controversy surrounding Jerry Fallwell and the Moral Majority, and an atmosphere ripe for mistrust and challenge developed. The opulent lifestyles of many Christian leaders became public knowledge. Investigative journalism turned its attention toward churches and parachurch organizations. American Christianity found itself in an integrity crisis with failing respectability and a lack of confidence in the eyes of many people, both Christian and non-Christian. The days of effective autocratic leadership were ending quickly and adjustments needed to be made. People were looking for and expecting some accountability. Confidence in both organizations and leaders needed to be restored. Changes needed to be made—visible changes. Unfortunately, in many Christian circles

¹²Orrin D. Morris, “The Future of the Baptist Association,” *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 227.

these issues were simply not faced. Though, admittedly, in some Christian circles these issues were recognized and changes were made.

Two things may be understood concerning cultural influence in leadership as it is exercised in the Christian community. First, modern culture has indeed affected Christian leadership. Secular books have been read and secular methods have been adopted by church leaders. All generations of Christianity reflect their contemporary cultural settings to at least some degree. This reflection is not unusual and it is not unexpected. America is becoming an increasingly secular society and these secular attitudes have made their way into communities of faith and not without effect. In most cases this kind change has arguably been a negative thing. Men, in their own wisdom, do not grasp the wisdom of God. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians, “But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory” (v. 2:7) Faithful churches and Christian organizations have strived to minimize the secular world’s influence on their beliefs and doctrines since New Testament days. In spite of these efforts, secular society has its negative and positive influences. Secular philosophies are potent.

The second observation is that though secular influence has found its way into Christian organizations, the secular world is realizing that Christ’s model of leadership is more effective than the older, autocratic, secular models. Pragmatic approaches to leadership are finding that the biblical model works. People naturally respond positively to servant leadership. People prefer a leader who leads from among them and in front of them rather than from above them. The secular world, if nothing, is indeed pragmatic. If something works, it will be adopted. This principle has proved true in modern, Western leadership. Jonathan P. Pennington states, “As this king instructs us we learn that the one who wants to be first should not exercise an overbearing leadership style, but should be

the slave of all.”¹³ As the secular world is discovering the outworking of this truth, many Christian leaders are making the same discovery. How much more effective is servant leadership when the leadership is done in obedience to Christ and for the glory of God?

The Current Impact of the Home in America on Leadership

Many people are aware of the changes in the authority structure in Western homes. Corporal punishment is becoming a thing of the past. In homes where it is administered, the parents are often in danger of intervention from Child Protective Services, certainly disapproval from family and neighbors. Parents seem to rely more on the public schools and universities to impart moral awareness in their children than on training in the home, and these institutions appear happy to fill this role. Television and movies consistently portray parents as unaware and disconnected while the children are the holders of wisdom and knowledge. Many twenty-first century Western homes are centered on keeping the children happy and sparing them the consequences of their actions rather than imparting eternal principles and teaching them to care for themselves along with people around them. Children are living at home later in life and parents are aiding or supporting children who do move out and live on their own. Few people would dispute these assertions and many people would insist that they are, at heart, good. Most certainly things have changed in the American home.

Change in American thinking on education began with John Dewey. Steven Devendorf explains,

John Dewey (1859 - 1952) has made, arguably, the most significant contribution to the development of educational thinking in the twentieth century. He was an American psychologist, philosopher, educator, social critic and political activist.

¹³Jonathan P. Pennington, “The Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12 (2008): 48.

Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, concern with interaction, reflection and experience, and interest in community and democracy, were brought together to form a highly suggestive educative form. John Dewey is often associated with child-centered education.¹⁴

Dewey and his pragmatism introduced a form of education centered more on the child than society. Being an evolutionist and follower of Darwin, Dewey influenced American education away from long-accepted Christian values and toward secular, unproven values.

Previously it was demonstrated that secular culture infiltrates Christian culture. This principle has been true of Christian education. Secular influence has become the norm in Western education and it has had its impact on American churches. Gordon H. Lovik states,

With the introduction of John Dewey's experience-centered philosophy, a new influence entered the field of Christian education. Individuals accepting this philosophy became leaders in education. Teachers gradually began instructing children on the basis of human experience. Modern education became a science and not an art. Time was spent furnishing the child with the "heritage of the human race" rather than knowledge of facts and truths.

As a result of this influence, many evangelical churches of America follow this same philosophy in Christian education. The majority of Sunday schools and churches stress education rather than evangelization. While this seems hard to accept, an investigation of current evangelical materials supports this statement. Prior study of methods and materials had indicated that this liberal concept became the accepted practice of many evangelical local churches. Previous investigation also revealed that most writers in the field of Christian education received much of their education and methodology in liberal institutions.¹⁵

As liberal, secular thought seeped into Christian educational institutions, it soon worked its way into churches. Congregations heard this philosophy from the pulpit and in Sunday school and, consequently, this philosophy slowly found its way into Christian homes. As has been demonstrated, the 1960s ushered in a crisis in respect for authority in the United States. Many public figures and public institutions failed in the sight of

¹⁴Steven Devendorf, "John Dewey: A Pioneer in Educational Philosophy," 2, January 12, 2014, accessed April 11, 2016, www.oswego.edu/JohnDewey.

¹⁵Gordon H. Lovik, "Christian Education," *Central Bible Quarterly* 9 (1966): 3.

many Americans. Couple these failures with the experienced-based education espoused by Dewey, and American parents were rearing children who grew into adults who questioned all forms of authority, even God's authority over them and over his churches. Homes became child-centered with children lacking any real respect for any form of authority. Leaders who have no true followers are not real leaders at all and people who do not respect authority do not follow.

The greatest implication of the absence of true respect for authority in the home is that this lack of respect moved into society and, eventually, into churches. Leaders must realize that people who come into their congregations do not in all likelihood, arrive with a readymade respect for their positions or for their biblically mandated authority. These new arrivals have been trained to question, disrespect, and even openly oppose all appointed authority. This issue must be addressed in a church context. These new people will influence the body life of any congregation and they are not going away.

An important task for twenty-first century Western churches and Christian organizations is to teach biblical authority and train congregants to respect and submit to this God-ordained principle. People must understand that this lack of respect for authority is a serious, biblical issue. Lorne C. Sanny asserts,

We live in an ordered universe in which there is authority and submission to authority. That's the way things are. It's a fact we should learn to live with. If we do, we experience harmony and peace. If we try to go against it, we have conflict and catastrophe.

This is true in our everyday lives. Someone who drives the wrong way down an exit ramp onto a freeway is in extreme danger, because he violates the laws established by those with authority to make those laws. When we work against the fact of authority, we place ourselves in danger.¹⁶

14. ¹⁶Lorne C. Sanny, "Authority and Submission," *Discipleship Journal* 8 (1982):

Christians need to know there are consequences to not submitting to proper, God-given authority. It is up to Christian teachers to train people in this knowledge. Unless this truth is effectively taught and practically learned, the future will bring negative consequences for the congregant, the congregation and those in positions of leadership.

Conclusion

People are influenced by the secular world in which they live. Though secular influence is normally a negative thing and something to be avoided and counteracted, leadership in the Western, secular world is moving toward the biblical model. Men and women who do not know God are finding that Jesus was absolutely correct when He painted the servant leader picture for His twelve apostles. Because of this shift away from autocratic leadership, the Christian community does not find it necessary to struggle against this secular influence as it works its way into churches and other Christian organizations.

Though deacons are not required to be teachers of the Word, they are called on to meet the needs of the others in a servant spirit. These needs include, but are not limited to, financial and physical needs. Biblically-qualified deacons are certainly well suited to serve their congregants in the spiritual arena—it is not necessary to limit spiritual ministry to elders.

As to attitudes toward authority and its effect on deacons as they minister, most certainly a shift in attitudes toward authority in the Western world has occurred during the previous half century. These shifts began in the secular world but have found their way into churches and other Christian organizations. They must be dealt with and cannot be ignored. Churches must understand the changes that have taken place and people must be trained in scriptural principles relating to both leadership and submission

to leadership. Deacons must learn to lead from within the masses and not from above them.¹⁷ It is important to remember that Jesus' words on leadership are still valid—they apply to churches in today's world and they still work. The twenty-first century world is not the place nor is this the time for compromise on the part of Christian leadership. Servant leadership is God's chosen method for moving his people. Deacons are a strong part of God's chosen New Testament leadership structure.¹⁸ Following God's pattern and instruction is and always has been the right pattern to follow.

¹⁷See Alexander Strauch, *Minister of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 1992)

¹⁸Timothy Keller, *Resources for Deacons: Love Expressed through Mercy Ministries* (Lawrenceville, **ST**: Christian Education and Publication PCA, 1985)

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING AND TRAINING DEACONS IN BIBLICAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Scores of people have united in membership with Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, Texas, who have needed watch-care beyond what the lead pastor and pastoral staff could effectively provide. This need is an ongoing problem for the church; it is a good problem, but a problem nevertheless. The deacon board will fill a vital role in meeting the growing congregational need in the church body. In leading and coming alongside the membership, especially the weak and disenfranchised members who do not have the support of a nuclear family structure, deacons can fill an existing gap in the church's structure.

The American societal church structure is sometimes one where people are isolated and, at times, fall through the cracks of organizations structure. Some people may value anonymity but many people do not. For these reasons, it is important that New Testament churches have a strong leadership program in place that trains lay people in how to care for one another. An integral part of this program at Tanglewood is the deacon board. The deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church, as a board and as individuals, need training in what deacons are biblically and what their roles are in their local church setting.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process used to develop the teaching tools and to explain the implementation of the lessons designed for instructing Tanglewood's deacons in servant leadership. This project served as the initial stage in the overall development of an effective deacon watch-care program headed by the deacon

board. The intention was to train the five deacons at Tanglewood in biblical principles of leadership and service to prepare them for implementation of these principles in everyday church life.

The teaching project lasted for fifteen weeks. The tools developed included a pre-lesson questionnaire, an evaluation rubric for the questionnaire, five lessons or leaders' guides, a learner's workbook, an evaluation rubric for the lessons, an application of the pre-lesson questionnaire in a post-lesson setting, an answer key for the questionnaire, and an evaluation rubric. The leadership materials were developed during the first five weeks of the project using materials used and cited in the first three chapters of this paper. Five leadership lessons were developed. In week 6, the lessons were evaluated and revised. Week 7 was used to develop the pre- and post-lesson questionnaire. Week 8 was given to evaluating and revising the questionnaire. The five lessons were taught during weeks 9 through 13 bracketed by administering the pre- and post-lesson questionnaires. Week 14 was given to scoring and evaluating the questionnaires.

This project was the first step in implementing radical change in how the deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa function. Before the deacons can effectively serve, they need a well-rounded knowledge of what God says about deacons, what history says about deacons, and what Tanglewood Baptist Church expects from her serving deacons. The five men who comprise the deacon board at Tanglewood agreed to be the pioneers in changing the structure of lay leadership in an assembly with more than sixty years of history. They needed to know what they were doing in their deacon position and why.

Development of the Leadership Curriculum

A major part of this project was developing a curriculum to follow in teaching the five deacons. A questionnaire and five lessons were needed for preparing these men to function in a servant-leader capacity.

Week 1

The pre-lesson questionnaire¹ was developed in week 1, along with a rubric for evaluating the questionnaire.² A questionnaire key was also developed.³ The purpose of the questionnaire was designed for the purpose of establishing a baseline of knowledge among the deacons before training began. The questionnaire was sent to three colleagues along with the rubric for evaluation. One of these colleagues served on the staff at Tanglewood, one is the pastor of a church in another state, and the third is the president of a Bible college in Boston. The responses from the colleague and pastor were quite different from those of the Bible college president, who saw the questionnaires from an academic perspective. He did not take into account that the men answering the questions were not college students/ graduates, and most were blue collar working men with high school educations; the questionnaire was designed for laymen, not theologians. Consequently, his suggestions would have taken the instrument deeper into doctrine and made the questions more technical along with being more difficult than I desired. Within the week, however, the rubrics⁴ were returned and alterations were made in the questionnaire.

¹See appendix 1.

²See appendix 2.

³See appendix 3.

⁴See appendix 4.

Weeks 2 through 5

In weeks 2 through 5, the five lessons were developed⁵ along with a rubric for lesson evaluation.⁶ These lessons, along with the evaluation rubric, were sent to the same three colleagues for evaluation. The lessons were returned along with the evaluation rubric⁷ and again some modifications were made. The same challenge came from the Bible college president, who made very good suggestions for a lesson designed to be taught in an academic setting. After the lessons were prepared and revised, a workbook was developed for the deacons to use as the lessons were taught.⁸ At the end of the five-week preparation period, the evaluation and lessons were ready to be administered and the times for both evaluation and teaching were scheduled.

Early Sunday morning before worship was the best times for the sitting deacons to engage in training. There was already a longstanding board meeting at this time where issues were discussed and prayer was offered, so it was mutually agreed among the pastor and deacons that the board would arrive earlier than usual for seven weeks. These seven weeks allowed time for the questionnaire and the five lessons to be taught.

Before beginning the project, the current serving deacons were briefed on the upcoming questionnaire and lessons. They were given an overview describing what they could expect from the process. They were told, in a general way, where the church was moving concerning servant leadership. Care was taken to ascertain whether the current serving deacons were willing to take part in both the training and the changes the training

⁵See appendix 5.

⁶See appendix 6.

⁷See appendix 7.

⁸A special thanks to my wife, Donna, for her help in illustrating the workbook sheets.

for which these men would be prepared. The changes proposed would take considerably more time, and they would need to be willing to invest themselves in other people in a new way. The deacons were also given an overview of the coming lessons and what would be expected during each week of the training. It was encouraging that all five serving deacons were not only willing to undergo the training but eager to implement the new principles and to organize in a new way.

Preparation time was important. Three of the sitting deacons had served for many years and were settled into how things were and how they have been. I did not feel it wise to spring any new principles or reorganization on them without instituting pre-training to prepare the men for the coming lessons. It was my desire for these men to be spiritually prepared before we began the training.

Questionnaire and Lesson Implementation

Week 6 began the actual implementation of the project. The five deacons became involved in the project by filling out the pre-project questionnaire and being taught the five lessons.

Week 6

In week 6, the questionnaire was administered to the five deacons. Five men comprise a small group, but they are the only people in the church serving in the capacity of servant leader deacons, therefore these five deacons were necessary for both the questionnaire and the lessons. Because of the small test group, no names or number codes were used on the evaluation; each evaluation was anonymous. The evaluation was administered on a Sunday morning during the normal board prayer and service preparation time. The deacons arrived approximately one half hour early for the meeting to give time to administer the questionnaire. The material in the questionnaire evaluated the serving deacons on their knowledge of both the Bible and church history concerning

the office of deacon. Their knowledge of different approaches, qualifications, and practical out workings of the office were also tested. The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine a baseline for their knowledge concerning servant leadership in the possible duties of serving deacons before training was implemented. This evaluation questioned the men on areas and issues that would be dealt with in the five coming lessons. These evaluations were turned in, grouped together, labeled as pre-training questionnaire and filed. They were scored and compared to the post-lesson questionnaire when the training was completed.

During the administration of this questionnaire, two of the deacons, older men, appeared to struggle with the instrument. They took an inordinately long time in completing the evaluation and gave every visible indication that they were struggling with the process. These men were both high school educated but were in their senior years. I later realized that these men were not accustomed to working in a written format though they did not express this issue clearly now.

Week 7

Week 7 marked the start of the teaching process. The church's five deacons arrived approximately thirty minutes early for the normal Sunday morning board meeting. It had been agreed that the normal board meeting activities would be set aside or at least delayed for the five weeks while the training took place. It was believed that these extra thirty minutes would give ample time for teaching and discussion. Workbooks were handed out and pre-lesson instruction was given. I stressed that discussion was welcomed and encouraged. The deacons were free to interrupt at any time with a question.

I asked if there were any questions or comments before the actual teaching began, and to my surprise, there was a good deal of discussion. Most comments took the

form of encouragement. Several of the men expressed how excited they were over the movement forward. Some had discussed the previous week's preview of where the lessons were going with their wives, and their wives were also excited about the direction the deacons would be taking in servant leadership.

The first week's lesson dealt with the need for deacons in a New Testament church setting, the biblical origin of the office, the role of deacons throughout church history, and deacons in modern cultural settings. There was a good deal of discussion and several questions were posed throughout the discussion. The men appeared surprised that deacons did not exist as church officers in the Gospels and that the apostles were not deacons. The men had not noticed that the title "deacon" was not used in Acts 6. One deacon stayed after the lesson and suggested that I slow the teaching down. He was one of the older men who had struggled with the evaluation. He shared that he and the other older deacon were having trouble keeping up with the information. I spoke with the other four deacons during the morning and an adjustment in the teaching schedule was made. It was agreed that the deacons would henceforth arrive forty-five minutes early for the Sunday morning board meeting, thus giving more time for a slower paced teaching. I determined to slow myself down in delivery. My normal pace of speaking was just too rapid for everyone in the group.

Week 8

On week 8, the deacons arrived forty-five minutes early for the second of five lessons. The theme of this lesson was biblical leadership: what is the biblical model of a good leader? First, the principle of biblical leadership was examined using Matthew 20:25-28 as a template. The greatest characteristic of biblical leadership is a spirit of humble service. God's leaders are to be incarnational in their leadership; they are to lead from within the group, not above it. Though leading from within a group may sound

contradictory, Jesus assures that it is not. People responded well to one who is with them rather than above them.

The biblical pattern for leadership was then examined using John 13:1-16. We discussed how Jesus embodied servant leadership in the upper room by washing the apostles' feet. He then instructed these men to emulate his spirit in their own lives. This principle is supra-cultural and applies to all biblical leaders in any century and in any society. Few would deny that Jesus Christ was a leader and a strong one, yet he was a servant and a humble one. Jesus is the ideal example of incarnational leadership in that he walked with his followers, not above them.

Finally, in this lesson we looked at the biblical example of servant leadership in a church setting. The passage used for this thought was Acts 6:1-7. Here, godly men were placed in charge of serving needy widows, the most disenfranchised people in the fledgling church at Jerusalem. Though the seven men named in this passage oversaw this ministry, meaning they were leaders, they were in charge of service. This lesson was a powerful example and made a deep impression on all five deacons; they were grasping the truth that leading is more than handing down directives.

The encouraging element of this lesson was found in how accepting the deacons at Tanglewood were of this leadership principle. There was excitement in the room as questions were asked and discussion ensued. Two of the five deacons at Tanglewood were in office when my ministry began here more than four years ago. The previous criteria for deacon candidates were much different than the nominating criteria under my leadership. It was a joy to see the deacons who were already serving on my arrival embrace the biblical leadership model.

Week 9

Week 9 began the third of five lessons. The subject of lesson 3 was biblical qualifications for those who would serve as deacons. The first concentration of the lesson focused on the truth that there *are* standards for candidates for the office and for those currently serving as deacons. These standards are not ideals; they are to be practical norms in the lives of deacons and for men who are considered for the office. Deacons and candidates are not expected to be flawless in the areas to be discussed, but their lives must be characterized by certain virtues. In short, these men were to have credibility before the congregation.

The second focus of lesson 3 was on the actual qualifications for deacons as found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. These qualifications concern themselves with personal character in verses 8b-9 and the soundness of the deacon and potential deacon's family life in verse 12. The qualifications for a deacon's wife are also addressed in verse 11. The emphasis is on men being an example to those they are leading in service. A church is a family, made up of families and potential families. If deacons are to have credibility in the church family, they must themselves have credibility in their own families as well as in their own personal lives, both public and private. The Tanglewood deacons needed to know that being a deacon was about more than having a strong personality and being successful in business.

The third focus of the lesson was on testing. Deacons are to be tested before they are appointed, not after. Though Scripture is not specific on how they are to be tested, and churches use different means in accomplishing this task, the testing itself is to be a common thread among New Testament churches. An unqualified person occupying the office of deacon can bring shame to the office, the local church, and the name of Jesus Christ. In the past, Tanglewood Baptist Church had no set method for testing

potential deacons. During this lesson, a standardized method for testing potential deacons in the church was explained.

The last focus of this lesson was on the faithful deacon's reward as found in verse 13. Though some people may say men should not serve God in view of rewards, certainly the deacons' rewards are not only mentioned, they are described. In light of verse 13, it is reasonable to surmise that reward is a valid motivator in the life of any potential or serving deacon. According the verse 13, deacons who serve well will find both personal and public reward. This reward is not monetary, nor is it a reward that includes power over others. This reward is, as with all things in the life of a deacon, couched in a servant context. Deacons are blessed in their own growth in confidence in their faith and in a visible boldness in Christ.

This lessons tells that those who serve as deacons must not be taken lightly by the church nor should this service be taken lightly by those who would personally serve. Deacons are important people in church life and they are to exemplify the best in those who unite as members of any local assembly. Deacons do more than work, they serve as examples and can be trusted due to careful vetting by the church.

This lesson was received with much interest from the sitting deacons at Tanglewood. In several cases, these men were appointed to their offices before I was called to serve this congregation as lead pastor. They have had no practical training, no instruction, and they have had virtually no duties. Discussion during and after the lesson showed that they were amazed at how much emphasis God places on the caliber of the man who would take on the mantel of deacon. The previous pastors nominated men for deacon, the sitting board ratified his choice, and then the congregation would affirm these men by vote. It is reasonable to assume that past pastors did vet men for this office, but the sitting deacons and candidates for the office were unaware that testing was taking

place. The idea of officially testing men for deacon was new to these men. For the first time, some of these men realized the practical importance of the man himself where this vital office is concerned. I could see that it was beginning to strike home that their positions were much more than honorary.

Week 10

In week 10, I taught the fourth of five lessons. Again, the deacons met with me early on a Sunday morning for this training. This lesson focused on a general, biblical description of the deacon's job. The foundational text for lesson 4 was again Acts 6:1-7. There were three concentrations in this lesson. The first concentration was the biblical example found in the foundational text. There is no job description for a deacon in the New Testament. If the seven men in this text were deacons, they make up the only New Testament example of deacons in action. First Timothy 3 gives qualifications for the deacon but no job description. Even in this passage, the task was named but no description of how the task was accomplished is given.

In this concentration, the deacons were originally appointed because there was an unmet need in the church at Jerusalem. The principle taught was that the office of deacon was created to meet a genuine need. Brian Croft writes,

In a moment of divine providence, the apostles realized their calling was not to go meet that need but to ensure the need was met. They organized the appointment of faithful, godly men to carry it out. Not just any random men, but seven particular men “of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3).⁹

The office in Jerusalem church was tailored to fit the need. Widows were being neglected in the church, so men were appointed to see that these disenfranchised women were cared for. This office was not created to promote ambitious men; it was created to

⁹Brian Croft and Bryce Butler, *Oversee God's People: Shepherding the Flock through Administration and Delegation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 32.

serve needy people. The men sought out were godly and wise, a great combination for dealing with a delicate task.

The second concentration for this lesson focused on biblical instructions concerning deacons. There are no normative biblical instructions for deacons in the New Testament—no instructions to individual deacons and none to churches. A biblical model is displayed, but no biblical commands are given. There is not even any assurance that all first century churches had deacons in their organizational structure. The church in Philippi had them because they are named in Philippians 1:1, and it is assumed that the church at Jerusalem had them if Acts 6:1-7 describes deacons. The church at Ephesus either had them or was contemplating initially appointing them because Paul gave Timothy instructions on the kind of men who should be chosen to serve in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Beyond these examples, there is no record that other churches identified in the New Testament had deacons. They may have had deacons, but the reader is not told either way. The principle of this second concentration was that much is unknown about the nature of deacon service in first century churches because we simply are not told. This principle leaves a great deal of room for interpretation where the purpose and function of the office are concerned and it may give churches a great deal of latitude in assigning duties to their deacons.

The third concentration of this fourth lesson dealt with realities of the biblical interpretation and application of what is known about deacons from Scripture. There are two extremes available to churches where interpretation of this office is concerned. First, some churches may hold that deacons may only do what the seven in Acts 6 did. They have charge over serving needy widows. Any responsibility beyond those of church widows goes beyond the biblical mandate for the office. On the other extreme, some churches may hold that Acts 6 teaches that a church has the right to create any office and assign that office with any responsibilities if there is a legitimate need. Positions may not

only be created but their responsibilities redefined as needs change. Per this school of thought, deacons may do whatever the church needs them to do at the time. The office may be renamed, qualifications for the office may be altered to fit the times, and duties may be changed to fit the people who are serving at any given time. In short, there are no limits or settled standards for the office of deacon.

A church does not have to go to any extreme where deacons' responsibilities are concerned. This middle ground allows some fluidity within the job description of the deacon. At the same time, this position holds that this fluidity must remain within the bounds of the biblical qualifications for the office along with the type of service described in Acts 6. It would not be appropriate to alter the qualifications for the office as found in 1 Timothy 3 to accommodate a change in responsibilities. It would be appropriate to alter duties within the deacon board to meet needs within the church that go beyond needy widows. For example, single mothers and elderly people sometimes have the same needs as indigent widows. A deacon may minister to these people without violating the spirit or qualifications given by Scripture for the office. As a further example, a man who has no credibility in his family life, though he has strong leadership skills and financial acumen, would still not be qualified to serve as a deacon.

In summation, Tanglewood Baptist Church would fall into the middle position where the deacon's job was concerned. We long to be biblical but not to follow the letter of the office while missing the spirit of the example. The men received this lesson with less discussion than in previous lessons. They understood the principles shared and none of them saw conflict with their previous concept of a serving deacon. They were informed that the last lesson would concentrate on a deacon's responsibility as it pertained to our local church. What would a Tanglewood deacon look like? This simple announcement aroused their curiosity and gave rise to more discussion than in the actual

lesson. At this point, the five men showed a good deal of enthusiasm and were eager to go further.

Week 11

Week 11 began early on Sunday morning as the men came with anticipation. They had learned much about deacons. They knew where the office originated along with the circumstances that accompanied that origination. They were versed in who was qualified to serve as a deacon and much about how deacons had served throughout history. They were also aware of how little the Scriptures said about deacons. They also had some knowledge of the extreme positions available where the description of the duties for the office is concerned. Two of the men commented on being excited about learning what a deacon looked like at Tanglewood Baptist Church. We had been moving toward the lesson and the men were ready to tackle deaconship in our local setting.

This fifth and last lesson focused on the Tanglewood Baptist Church deacon. We began with our needs as a church. People in our church have needs that require attention, and these people were not limited to widows. There are single mothers and elderly people with no family support group. We also have people who are either needy or new to the church and, if not given servant-leader attention, may otherwise fall away or fail without being noticed. People go through difficulties, have health problems, and other issues in life. Some people fall into unemployment in our declining economy. The church needs to systematically look after these people, know when there is a crisis in others' lives, and notice when individuals are not attending. The more Tanglewood grows in membership, the more critical this oversight will become. The group was taught that it is important to organize to address present and future needs among the people, and this responsibility would be the charge of the deacons. It was important to realize that care

would not happen automatically for those who do not speak for themselves. We must be diligent to know needs.

The teaching focused toward how this group would address these needs in our church setting. The first act would be to divide the membership among the deacons into five roughly equal parts. In this process, we would take care to keep the widows, elderly, and other needy numbers in roughly equal numbers. Each deacon would be given one of the five groups to serve and watch over. When people join the church, they would be assigned to a deacon who would make contact and become acquainted with them. As numbers grow in church membership, deacons would be added to prevent individual deacons from being overburdened by the sheer numbers of people over whom they were to exercise watch care. The deacons would strive to keep the less visible members from being neglected in daily ministry.

Each deacon would hold certain responsibilities concerning those whom they serve. They would watch the attendance on the part of their charges. When one whom they are serving misses more than two consecutive services for no apparent reason or becomes otherwise slack in attendance, the deacon would make a gentle inquiry to let the person know they were missed and attempt to learn whether there is a crisis or issue that the staff should be aware of and if there is some way the church could be of help to them. The deacons are also to be generally aware of needs, especially among the needy whom they serve. Sometimes yard work, home repairs, rides to the doctor or to the store are required. Some single mothers need a male role model in the lives of their children. The deacon can move to connect their children with healthy Christian families where these children can watch a functional family of faith operate. Someone needs to be watching in a loving manner to identify needs and struggles. This administration would be the task of Tanglewood's deacons. Anyone can be a loving people watcher.

The next task for the deacons would be to move to meet discovered needs. When the deacon is not able to personally attend a need, he may serve as a liaison to connect the right person within the church body to offer and provide help. At times, needs may be greater than the deacon may attend to or more complicated than the deacon can adequately address even by serving as a liaison. In these cases, the need or problem may be shared at the weekly board meeting where the deacons and staff may discuss this need and develop a plan to address the need or struggle corporately. Outside help may need to be brought in at church expense or staff may need to intervene on a level in which a deacon is not trained. The goal would be to work together to see that the church is a scripturally-functioning church body with less visible members not going unnoticed or ignored. We want to see true needs met and desire to organize to meet needs before they arise.

By this organization of the church deacons, we hope to accomplish several things. First, the men will serve within the biblical parameters given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Second, the deacons will lead the congregation in service; they will be a corporate example that, hopefully, other people in the congregation will follow. Third, real needs in a growing congregation will be met. Last, people will not be ignored and needs will not be missed. At the least, the number of those who are missed will be greatly minimized. Though no local church will ever be perfect, as a church, Tanglewood can be better. The aim is to be significantly better in servant leadership.

Week 12

In week 12, the pre-lesson evaluation questionnaire was again administered. This questionnaire was given early on Sunday morning at the beginning of the weekly leadership meeting. The five men took approximately a half hour to complete the

questionnaire. I noticed that the same two men seemed to struggle with the actual mechanics of filling out the questionnaire.

After the second administering of the questionnaire, a time of discussion was held. The topic of this discussion included the five lessons along with the actual questionnaire. All five men spoke positively concerning the lessons. Each believed he had gained both knowledge and confidence in not only his role as a deacon but in the biblical and historic roles held by deacons. They all saw the time invested during lessons as a wise investment and believed the process would pay good dividends.

The discussion concerning the evaluation was not totally positive. Several of the men expressed added confidence in filling out the questionnaire after the lessons when compared to their confidence level the first time they completed it. One of the deacons believed his knowledge of the office improved while the lessons were taught but he was not confident that his questionnaire would reflect his progress. Two of the deacons were not so confident and expressed some concerns about their performance. These two men had an obvious struggle with filling in the answers on the evaluation. It is worth noting that both these two deacons were the oldest two of the five men. Neither of these men did any post-high school work. Though they are active and faithful men of wisdom, neither considered himself academic to any degree. Both men expressed that they struggled with the test and did not expect their performance to be good.

All the men were especially enthused with the prospect of initiating the principles laid out in lesson 5. They genuinely voiced a vision for a church with active servant leadership where more careful concern is taken in looking after one another in the membership. Several statements were made related to being an example to the rest of the congregation and the hope that mutual care will flourish among those in the congregation who do not hold positions of leadership. Nothing concerning church growth in numbers

was stated, but several comments concerning spiritual growth were expressed. These men want to go deeper. The discussion was encouraging to me as lead pastor.

Week 13

Week 13 was spent scoring questionnaires, measuring results, and then assessing outcomes. A baseline for knowledge coming into the lessons was determined by scoring the questionnaire distributed among the deacons on week 1 of the project. The effectiveness or lack thereof was determined by scoring the same questionnaire on week 12 of the project and then comparing the two. The results of these scores and lessons learned are evaluated in the next chapter.

Weeks 14 and 15

These two weeks were devoted to putting this project down in writing. Materials were gathered, lessons were examined, and discussions were recalled. The scope of this record may be useful for future administrations of training for deacons at Tanglewood.

Conclusion

This project was the first major step in creating a more effective, better organized deacon board at Tanglewood Baptist Church. Things were learned during these fifteen weeks. In research, I learned things concerning the office of deacon that I did not know. In teaching the men, I learned things about their learning styles and basic knowledge of a deacon's responsibilities that sometimes surprised me. The five deacons and I would agree that this entire project was a learning experience for us all. As one might expect, there were some negatives. I encountered problems while administering the evaluation questionnaires. Some preconceptions were difficult for several of the men to discard. Change is difficult, especially when it confronts long-held positions.

Tanglewood Baptist Church of Odessa, Texas, continues its efforts to better serve the church body, especially those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, and generally helpless. This project is an important and vital step toward improving this service. There are needs and God has given us the resources, along with the means, to meet these needs. Tanglewood only needed a solid plan that informs the deacons of the needs and a delivery system for addressing these needs. Training is an important step toward implementation and practical success.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The evaluation of this project is an examination of the purposes, goals, strengths, and weaknesses of this project along with proposed modifications that could enhance the effectiveness of the project. Personal reflections and theological observations will also be included in the final portion of this evaluation.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project is to biblically train and equip deacons of Tanglewood Baptist Church, Odessa, Texas, to share in supportive leadership to the senior pastor in both serving and leading the congregation. This purpose was appropriate for this church due to a long season of pastor-led ministries that had resulted in a congregation with virtually no part in the governance or leadership within the church body. The serving deacon board was more honorary than functional. They made no decisions, had no input in decisions the pastor made, and were not inclined to change this arrangement. The people of Tanglewood Baptist Church looked to the pastor for every decision, need, and spiritual insight. The church needed servant leadership.

Timing for training and equipping the deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church was good due to new leadership. The church called me as lead pastor in August of 2012. As I grew to know the congregation and the serving deacons, I saw that previous pastors had a much different leadership style and model of functioning church government than I had. I came to Tanglewood looking to delegate responsibilities that others could shoulder. I longed to see the membership cared for by each other as well as by the

church staff. The church had a virtual vacuum where servant leadership in the sphere of laymen and women was concerned. They needed to learn to care for each other. New leadership always brings changes, and my arrival proved to be no exception. I saw that one of my primary tasks, as a vision caster in the church, was to teach the people to lead and serve each other. I sensed that the place to begin in this new kind of leadership was with the appointment leaders, the deacons. I also believed the appropriate time to institute those changes in leadership was early in my tenure in the church. People naturally expect change with new leadership. I further saw the serving deacons as men who would be receptive to biblically reasonable training.

A further reason that this deacon training was appropriate was that the church had recently gone through a season of major conflict. The church had a minor split approximately two years before I assumed the position of lead pastor. The previous pastor and the pulpit committee assured me that the people who caused the conflict had left the church in the previous split. This assurance proved to be inaccurate. The people who caused the previous conflict were still present, and they became active within weeks of my arrival. Soon opposition and defamation rose to a fever pitch. Then, a major split resulted. The church was left with less than half of the congregation. The lack of lay leadership became, not only apparent, but harmful to the church. Those who remained in the church needed people to follow and to set an example. Some hurting people needed someone to help them heal. Unfortunately, the serving deacons were ill-equipped to act. They passively stood by, waiting to see if the church would survive. One deacon expressed that he wished he knew what to do. These men were not even equipped to intelligently pray for the church and for the people who were harmed in the church conflict. The time was right to train these men. The people of the church were willing, and even eager, to follow sound biblical leadership.

A further reason for this purpose being appropriate was that the church needed to move toward a biblical model of leadership. The serving deacons were not providing any form of leadership. Most the congregation agreed that the deacons did need to lead. The task was to see that they did not provide leadership according the unsaved world's model. These men needed to understand what God expected from a leader and what a biblical leader looked like in both principle and action. This project gave these men a strong biblical picture of what they should aspire to be.

Last, this project purpose was appropriate now because the church needed to prepare for numerical growth. The church had doubled in size since the split. The more people in the congregation, the more needs were likely to be missed by leadership. We needed to spread the responsibility among the leading men while the congregation size was manageable. We believed it would be easier to organize for growth than to organize as growth took place. A vital part of the growth strategy was to have serving deacons who were ready, willing, and equipped, to watch over and assist the needy and struggling members in times of trial, temptation, and change.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Goals for this project were chosen as the best means of accomplishing and measuring success or failure in meeting this project's purpose. I found it important to develop goals that would successively build on one another toward accomplishing the stated purpose. My original vision of this project was to go much further than those goals finally adopted. I originally proposed not only training deacons but implementing the entire servant leader program. After some examination and with the help of my project advisor, it was determined that total implementation would prove to be too large a task for this project. Implementation would, God willing, follow the project. God led me to settle on goals that facilitated teaching rather than program implementation. Thus, the

adopted goals were designed to ready the deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church to spiritually and intelligently serve, once actual service began.

This project sought to accomplish four goals for the purpose of bringing about the project's stated purpose. Each goal logically began or followed the preceding goal and thus built toward project completion of the project's purpose. The first goal began the project with a questionnaire to assess the serving deacon's current knowledge and outlook toward servant leadership. The second goal was to develop five lessons addressing servant leadership from a biblical, historical, and cultural perspective. These five lessons were used to accomplish the third goal, which was to teach the five serving deacons at Tanglewood what deacons biblically, historically, culturally were and how they would function in the context of our local church setting. These lessons and accompanying study guides would be formed into a workbook for training future deacons. The fourth goal was to evaluate the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness in goal 3. This goal would be accomplished by administering the pre-teaching questionnaire in a post-lesson setting. The compared results would give me an idea if knowledge and a biblical view of the office of deacon had increased among the deacons.

Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the present knowledge and outlook of the current deacon board toward their roles as servant leaders. A questionnaire was developed on the Likert scale for the purpose of accomplishing this goal.¹ Each question addressed material to be found in the lessons developed and taught to the deacons over five successive weeks. Those who participated in this assessment were asked to answer per their degree of agreement or disagreement with the stated question. A Likert scale of "0"

¹See appendix 2 for Deacon Evaluation Questionnaire.

to “5” was used to assign point value to each response. An answer of “strongly agree” would merit a point value of “5.” Higher point values were determined by the degree of correctness and conviction in each answer.

This questionnaire was reviewed and evaluated by three colleagues. One colleague was a Bible college president in Boston; his feedback gave an academic view of the prototype lessons. The second colleague was a fellow pastor and doctoral candidate located in Illinois; his evaluation gave a pastoral perspective, coming from someone serving in a different church setting and in a different denomination. The third colleague was a staff member at Tanglewood Baptist Church; his evaluation gave a perspective of someone who knew our local church setting and church culture. The feedback was mostly positive with some suggestions and a few corrections. The questionnaire was evaluated with a scale using a five-point score increment for grading sufficiency or insufficiency in questions posed. Table 1 below demonstrates that the questionnaire was evaluated with an overall score of 93.3, which exceeded the minimum score of 90 required for an acceptable level of quality in questions.

Table 1. Name of table

Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3
95	90	95

Out of a possible 125 score, the highest questionnaire score was 102 and the lowest was 76. The average score was 85.4. I learned several things in the process of scoring and examining the questionnaires. First, the five men had a fair and general knowledge where deacons were concerned. Though some of the questions could easily be reasoned out, some questions required Bible knowledge. Second, I perceived that the

men were taking the entire training process seriously; they were intent on doing their best on the questionnaire. Twice procedural or clarification questions were asked and the concentration level while filling out the questionnaire appeared to be high. Third, they were unclear on some topics in the questionnaire, so there was room for improvement and a need for teaching. There were things about being a deacon that these men did not understand or misunderstood, and the scoring results were encouraging to me in that they demonstrated that this project was needed by these men on an individual basis.

Two questions were missed by all the men. There was a strong rejection of the notion that any New Testament churches might have had women deacons. Across the board, question 4 was answered in the strong negative. All five men were certain that women never served in the capacity of deacon or deaconess. Question 20 dealt with the appropriateness of a man seeking the office of deacon, and the men generally expressed that it would be inappropriate to desire or seek this office. It was a surprise to me that several of the men did not know that the word “deacon” meant servant. Two of the men scored very well on the test. Except for the two questions cited, their misses were a matter of degree. They answered correctly though they did not strongly agree or disagree, depending on the appropriateness of the answer to the individual question.

Following the administration of the questionnaire, I engaged the men in some discussion. They were generally positive about the experience of answering the questions. Though the questionnaires were not yet scored, I asked questions about any issues that gave the men pause. No one voiced any concerns, though three of the men said the questionnaire served to make them more interested in the coming lessons.

The application of this questionnaire gave me a good picture of the biblical knowledge of the deacon board and some strong ideas about what progress should be seen after the lessons were taught. The questionnaire also affirmed to the men that the

lessons were needed and whetted their appetites for knowing more about the office they were holding. The entire process was encouraging. All five of the men participated in both the pre-and post-lesson questionnaires. With total participation, this first goal was considered successful.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a five-lesson curriculum that would equip Tanglewood's deacons for servant leadership. These lessons were based on the purpose of this project. Each lesson dealt with a vital issue or focus concerning the office of deacon. My aim was to teach the men what the Bible said about deacons. I also taught what the Bible, in some cases, did not say about deacons. The men also learned what history teaches about deacons. Finally, we addressed what is seen in church culture today concerning deacons along with what deacons will look like as they serve in our local church setting.

I developed the five lessons, using resources available in my personal library and with material previous studied for this project, much of which is contained in chapters 2 and 3 along with material learned from the pre-lesson questionnaire administered in goal 2. Each lesson was sent to three colleagues for evaluation. The same colleagues evaluated the lessons who evaluated the questionnaire.

The lessons were scored in eight areas with each sufficient or exemplary valued at 12:5 points. The average score of the total of fifteen review sheets was 95.8 (as demonstrated in table 2 below). which demonstrated a sufficiency in the lessons in all areas evaluated.

Table 2. Name of table

Lesson	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3
1	87.5	100	100
2	100	100	100
3	87.5	100	100
4	100	100	87.5
5	100	87.5	87.5

After the lessons were in their final form, I developed a workbook for the deacons' use while being taught. These workbooks were designed in a fill-in-the-blank format with some artistic illustrations. I wrote the material, and my wife assisted with the illustrations and animation included in the worksheets. The workbooks were given to the deacons as theirs to keep. The hope is that these books will be useful for future reference as the men continue to serve. Extra workbooks were produced for future use as new men come onto the deacon board. Each deacon was taught the five lessons to prepare them for serving in their refined roles.

The five lessons were designed to be taught in an intimate setting where five learners joined with one teacher. The exchange was to be informal in nature with discussion and question welcome. The objective was to better inform and train these men while answering unanticipated questions. Care was made to make the lessons and workbooks user friendly, thus removing any intimidation, especially for the older men who had not been in an academic setting for many decades.

Most of this process was new to me. I have prepared lessons for years, and these lessons followed a format that was familiar to me. What was new in my process was the questionnaire and the evaluation. Probably the weightiest part of preparing these lessons was the knowledge that men were going to serve our congregation based, in a

large part, on what they were taught over the five-week period. These men were looking to me for instruction and training, but more, the congregation would gain or lose depending on what the serving deacons learned. The evaluations of these five lessons scored above 90 percent, which denoted that goal two was successful.

Goal 3

The third goal was to equip the five deacons at Tanglewood to engage in servant leadership. This goal was achieved by the actual delivery or teaching of the five lessons on biblical deaconship. The aim was tangible knowledge and familiarity on the part of the five deacons of the truth of God's Word concerning their office along with the gravity of their responsibilities. These lessons aimed at both head knowledge and a strong beginning in making actual servant leaders of the five serving deacons.

The five lessons were taught over a period of five successive weeks. The last four lessons were accompanied by a time for discussion of the previous week's lesson. The first four lessons ended with a preview time discussing the coming week's lesson topic. The idea was to reinforce each lesson and topic as much as was reasonable in the allotted time for teaching. Each lesson was taught in a forty-five minute to one-hour time frame. The lessons began in early August and concluded in September. All five deacons were present for each lesson and the entire process was well received by the entire board! These lessons were followed with the post-lesson , which was scored with a *t*-test. The results of the test are given in goal 5. The results of the *t*-test showed that goal 3 was successful.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of the series of lessons on deacon qualifications and servant leadership for weaknesses and to identify areas that needed to be revised before repeating these lessons with future deacons. The evaluation

was done by administering the pre-lesson questionnaire as a post-lesson questionnaire and then comparing scores via a *t*-test. The post-class questionnaire was administered on a Sunday morning, the week following the last of the five deacon lessons.

There was an overall improvement in the scores. The high score went from 102 pre-lesson to 117 post-lesson. The mean score went from 85.4 to 96.2, which is an almost 11-point increase over the pre-lesson average. It was also encouraging to see that the absolute value of the *t*-stat was larger than the *t*-critical value. Last, the *p* value was less than .05. The teaching of the five lessons on deacons to the select group of median adults made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge of the material covered in the lessons ($t_{(9)}=0.30446$, $p<.008$) (see table 3).

Table 3. Name of table

Participant	1 st score	2 nd score	Difference	
1	72	90	18	
2	83	105	22	
3	102	117	14	
4	95	116	24	
5	86	93	7	0.030446

The great difference in the scoring was found in the confidence factor. The men who gained in their scores did so by moving their answers from 4 to 5, thus showing a greater confidence in their answers. The scoring indicated a clear, upward learning curve on these lessons. The men did gain in their knowledge along with their confidence in what they knew. The scores indicated an overall success in the construct of the lessons, along with the teaching and learning processes.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

The strengths of this project are anchored in two of the achieved goals. The first goal related to assessing the deacons' initial knowledge and vision of the office they were holding. The second goal involved communicating effectively with them concerning what they should know and what their vision should be biblically.

The questionnaire was an important part of this project. Without it, I would not have efficiently known what the church's deacons knew and how they perceived their role. I was encouraged to learn how much they knew and how receptive they had been to earlier teaching. Though they were not previously acting as servant leaders, all five men came to hold a good grasp of what a servant leader was and what that leadership should look like in a deacon.

The lessons, as taught, solidified and built upon what these men already knew. It was fortunate that little, if any, wrong thinking had to be undone. These men were receptive, and they were already moving in the direction the lessons took them theologically and practically. By the end of the fifth lesson, Tanglewood's deacons were sold on servant leadership and were committed to investing themselves in the work of serving their church.

There was one apparent weakness in the project. As was related earlier, two of the deacons were older than the others and neither was educated beyond high school or had been in an academic setting in decades. These men struggled with the workbooks and questionnaires. Though they learned the principles well, they were uncomfortable with the written portions of the lessons and possibly a bit embarrassed by their limitations. I would have done well to have anticipated this issue.

Proposed Modifications

Given the opportunity to repeat this project and given an identical or similar set of circumstances, I would do two things differently. First, I would find a way to modify

the questionnaire and simplify the workbook for those who are less academic. The two men who struggled with the written exercises were godly and spiritually deep. They were gracious with their struggles and my heart went out to them. In a small group of five men, it was impossible for their failed efforts to be less than apparent. I would seek help and find a way to work with them on the two instruments without causing embarrassment.

Second, I would include instruction on prayer in the lessons. Though prayer is not mentioned in either the duties of the seven in Acts 6 or the qualifications for a deacon in 1 Timothy 3, there is enough teaching on prayer in the New Testament to justify stressing the need for a godly deacon to pray for those whom he is serving. This lacking was an oversight on my part.

Third, I would have given the Bible college president who served in reviewing the lessons more context concerning the men who would be sitting as learners. He was not aware that some of these men were oil field or retired oil field workers. They are wise in life but have little academic training. His evaluations would have allowed for these men's limitations had he known the facts. His overly academic suggestions were a failure on my part to properly communicate context.

Theological Reflections

In the process of working through this project, several reflections came to my mind. Two of these reflections were, as all theology is, practical in nature. One spoke to the spirituality of the men who are to serve. Churches are spiritual entities that exist on a physical, material plane. This unique combination provides for constantly emerging subjects for reflection on the part of God's people.

I was first impressed by how little the Scriptures say about deacons, yet how prominent the office is and has been throughout church history. Deacons are called by

title in only two passages in the Bible. The one example of deacons in action, Acts 6, is questionable. There is no certainty that the seven men named in the passage were technically deacons. We are not even sure all first-century churches had deacons. Despite these limitations, churches throughout history, in virtually all denominations and sects, have included deacons prominently in their governmental structures. Churches have recognized the need for godly, active lay-leadership in local church settings. These observations are not to say that deacons are ineffective or unnecessary; they have been and can be an important and useful part of a New Testament local church.

Second, I was struck by the great difference in how churches define a deacon's role. These differences are not found exclusively across denominational lines. They differ from church to church within some same denominations, Baptists being in this category. I was surprised to find that the office of deacon may range from having no responsibility to doing literally everything in the church, depending on their church structure. In other churches, the deacons do not even meet, much less make decisions on a church level. In some churches, deacons may bring in guest speakers without consulting the pastoral staff. I expected some agreement among churches concerning this prominent office; however, I did not find it.

Third, I found interesting the importance of a deacon having a Spirit-filled life. Assuming Acts 6 speaks to deacons, and for this project I assumed these men to be at least proto-deacons, a Spirit filled life was vital. Jim Cymbala writes, "Handing out food was a straightforward menial task, yet the apostles felt that being full of or controlled by the Spirit was a necessary qualification to wisely handle the simple job. Compare that with some of our contemporary church hiring practices."² Along with wisdom and being

²Jim Cymbala, *Spirit Rising: Tapping into the Power of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 37.

male, a Spirit-filled life was one of three qualifications for being a deacon in Acts 6. I have wondered how many men I have heartily recommended to the office of deacon without truly considering their walk with God and evidences of the Holy Spirit's control in their lives.

Personal Reflections

My own personal knowledge of the biblical facts concerning deacons has increased along with my expectations for the men who occupy the office. Before this project, I was convinced that I had a good knowledge of what God's Word said about deacons. However, I discovered subjects that I simply had missed and others that I assumed. I expected to find more material in the New Testament concerning the men and the office, and I expected to read the name associated with the office used more. I anticipated every church to visibly have these men serving. I also expected more clearly defined duties where I instead found clearly defined qualifications. This project has given me a greater understanding of what the Bible says and what the Bible does not say about this office. More, I am encouraged by what I have learned and I carry a greater confidence when both speaking on the subject and leading deacons as their pastor.

The unity of commitment and closeness in relationships has increased among the five deacons through this project. They share more transparently during their Sunday morning prayer meetings. They speak the same theological language where their duties and vision for the church are concerned. They are more confident knowing what they should be doing and what is expected of them. I am encouraged as I watch these men mature in their faith through a simple study about their office and how to carry out their tasks for Christ.

Finally, a great change has happened in me where governing a New Testament church is concerned at Tanglewood Baptist Church. Through the process of reading

sources for this project and speaking with fellow pastors and students along with conversations at Southern Seminary, I realized that our church needs to move to an elder-led model of church government. This change will not negate our congregational form of government, but will add a layer in leadership. When I began this project I was convinced that we needed deacons to lead our assembly in the spirit of servanthood. I now believe we need both deacons and elders for this leadership. I hope to see this change instituted soon, and possibly within the next calendar year. This change will require more teaching along with educating the congregation concerning the need and form of these adjustments. I truly did not anticipate this change in position on my part as I have been opposed to elder boards for the entire thirty-five years of my ministry as a senior pastor.

Conclusion

The deacons and I have been encouraged, educated, and motivated by the process of journeying through this project. Our deacons are a more cohesive body, and their knowledge is strong where their duties and qualifications are concerned. The relationship between these men and myself has never been better. Tanglewood's leadership is primed for positive change in the immediate future.

How this project benefits the church herself remains to be seen. I expect good things as we implement the watch-care program in our local assembly. I expect this decision to be a positive move toward caring for some members who were being missed and meeting needs that had not come to our attention or were simply ignored. Even the process of lovingly checking on people when they are absent will add a layer of accountability to our fellowship. Finally, I see these benefits staying in place as our church grows in membership. I firmly believe we are biblically organized for growth in our leadership.

APPENDIX 1

INITIAL DEACON EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to participate

The survey you are about to participate in is designed to identify the current understanding of the participants' biblical knowledge of the role of a deacon along in his functions in a modern New Testament church. This research is being conducted by Lyndel Lee for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. 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 completing this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Address the following statements The statements prompt you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. Jesus Christ instructed churches to elect deacons | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. A church must have deacons to be a true New Testament church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. Every church in the New Testament had deacons. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. There were women deacons in the New Testament | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. There were deacons in the Old Testament | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. A deacon should have a clean, exemplary life | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. The name <i>deacon</i> means servant. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. The Bible prescribes the number of deacons for a New Testament church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. Several deacons are found in the gospels. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. The apostles were also deacons. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

11. The primary task of a deacon is to serve the congregation.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. It is more important for a deacon to be godly than to be successful in financial matters.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. The position of deacon is largely an honorary one.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. Deacons must be older men.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. Deacons should work with the church members individually.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. Being a deacon requires a significant investment of time.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. A pastor works for the deacons.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. The title <i>deacon</i> means <i>leader</i> .	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. Deacons should lead people by serving them.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. It is not good to seek the office of deacon.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Biblical Qualifications and Characteristics of Deacons Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of biblical qualifications and characteristics of deacons.					
The material is biblical.					
The material is theologically consistent.					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clear.					

APPENDIX 3

PRE-LESSON QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWER KEY

Agreement to participate

The survey you are about to participate in is designed to identify the current understanding of the participants biblical knowledge of the role of a deacon along in his functions in a modern New Testament church. This research is being conducted by Lyndel Lee for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. 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 completing this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Address the following statements The statements prompt you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. Jesus Christ instructed churches to elect deacons | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. A church must have deacons to be A true New Testament church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. Every church in the New Testament had deacons. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. There were women deacons in the New Testament | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. There were deacons in the Old Testament | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. A deacon should have a clean, exemplary life | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. The name <i>deacon</i> means servant. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. The Bible prescribes the number of deacons for a New Testament church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. Several deacons are found in the gospels. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. The apostles were also deacons. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

11. The primary task of a deacon is to serve the congregation.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. It is more important for a deacon to be godly than to be successful in financial matters.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. The position of deacon is largely an honorary one.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. Deacons must be older men.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. Deacons should work with the church members individually.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. Being a deacon requires a significant investment of time.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. A pastor works for the deacons.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. The title <i>deacon</i> means <i>leader</i> .	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. Deacons should lead people by serving them.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. It is not good to seek the office of deacon.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. A deacon must have children	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. A deacon must be able to teach and or preach	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. Men should be evaluated before becoming deacons	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Poor character in a prospective deacon's wife should not disqualify him from holding the office.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. Deacons who serve well should be held in honor by the church	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 4

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE EVALUATION RUBRIC

Please evaluate each question for relevance to topic at hand, faithfulness to the Bible's teaching concerning deacons, theological soundness and clarity of presentation. Write comments and/or suggestions in area corresponding to each question's number.

1. Good base question since this is a New Testament issue. There is no ending punctuation.
2. Will be good for deacons to know what qualifies as a New Testament church.
3. Good question. It is important for deacons to be made aware of the various church governments and how they will fit into their part.
4. Reference to Pheobe in Rom 16. There is no ending punctuation.
5. This is a New Testament office.
6. Important point to be made. They are to be found "blameless."
7. True. This meaning tells those in service what they are, and a clue of what will be expected.
8. No specifics are given. Each local church body will be different.
9. The men in Acts 6:5 are sometimes considered the first deacons. There are 7 listed. I believe if they fit the role of deacon, they would count as several.

10. No. Their duties will be much different than the apostles. That is important for them to note.
11. True. This is an important fact for the men to remember. They do not have to have strong teaching or speaking abilities to be able to serve well.
12. True. The qualifications listed do not mention financial matters other than their household must be managed well.
13. Deacons will be expected to serve and spend time investing in people's needs. It is important for the men to realize that. In many churches the office is essentially and honorary one, but that is not the Biblical standard.
14. While not a requirement, the list of wives and children imply a man who is more experienced in life. It's good for young men to know they can also serve in this position.
15. This is true, but there will also be instances when the deacons may be serving a particular family and not simply individuals.
16. This is a true statement and something deacons must know. Due to the fact that they are leaders and depended upon, they may be called out at odd and inconvenient hours when needed.
17. Although this happens in some churches, it is not a Biblical model. Deacons will assist the pastor in ministry and allow him time to deliver God's word. Good question.
18. This question is almost identical to 7 but is still relevant to the topic.
19. Similar to question 11. Service is mentioned multiple times in questionnaire. Perhaps adding a few specific types of service may add variety or clarity to the topic.

20. This could potentially be a bad thing with the wrong motives of a person seeking honor. It is however a good thing to want to serve others.
21. Not true. He should have his family in order if he does have children. A deacon must be able to lead his own family before he can lead others. Good question. No ending punctuation.
22. I believe this is a common misconception. It is good to address this topic and give the truth. There is no ending punctuation.
23. 23. The question is a little vague. Evaluated in what area? Spiritually? Financially? Physically? There is no ending punctuation.
24. 1 Timothy 3:11 clearly says that a man's wife will have bearing on his position as deacon. There are qualities listed for her as well. It's good that this is made clear to all who wish to pursue the office of deacon.
25. If they serve well the men earn honor. They should be recognized by men for their service. God will also greatly reward that one day as well. This should not be a man's motivation for seeking the office of deacon though. There is no ending punctuation.

The questions cover the bases of what it means to be a deacon. They are scripturally sound and_ will be a good baseline for testing the knowledge of the deacon candidate on the office they wish to serve in.

EVALUATION QUIZ EVALUATION RUBRIC

Please evaluate each question for relevance to topic at hand, faithfulness to the Bible's teaching concerning deacons, theological soundness and clarity of presentation. Write comments and/or suggestions in area corresponding to each question's number.

1. Would you rather use the word "Scripture" instead of the words "Jesus Christ"?
2. Sounds good.
3. Can this answer truly be known?
4. Sounds good.
5. Sounds good.
6. Sounds good.
7. Sounds good.
8. Sounds good.
9. Sounds good.
10. Sounds good.
11. Sounds good.
12. Good Question.
13. Sounds good.
14. Sounds good.
15. Sounds good.
16. Sounds good.
17. Sounds good.
18. Sounds good.
19. Sounds good.
20. Sounds good.
21. Sounds good.
22. Sounds good.
23. Sounds good.
24. Sounds good.
25. Sounds good.

June 11, 2016

Response to Lyndel Lee questionnaire on deacons by David V. Melton, Pastor of Metrewest Baptist Church and President of Boston Baptist College

Introductory explanation: My personal understanding of the deacon function in the New Testament is that "serving" is one of the spiritual gifts given for the building of the ekklesia. I cannot imagine ANY church functioning without such service ("deaconing"). However, there does appear to be a codifying of serving, apparently in larger congregations, where the logistical aspects of serving seem to be so significant that someone/s are designated by the ekklesia to oversee "serving" in the congregation. On the occasions where this need is formalized and specified by the church, there are requirements as spelled out in I Timothy 3.

In my evaluations I will refer to the act of "deaconing/serving" with "d"

When there is a formal leader of servants - a "serving coordinator" if you will, I will use "D"

Lastly, while I can't believe I have created this approach, I cannot cite any scholar who understands and explains deaconing ministry in exactly the way I see it, FYI

DM

1. There is confusion as to when the ekklesia started in the minds of some theologians, of course. I find the classic dispensational position of Day of Pentecost untenable. Jesus used "ekklesia" and most of church life is modeled in the Gospels including church discipline and the Great Commission, all prior to Pentecost.

This may make the question less clear to some.

If, as I believe, Jesus did much to model church life, the relevance of this question is HIGH.

I think this question is a marvelous example of "d" vs. "D". Jesus taught his apostles to "serve" (to BE deakonoi) yet neve designated them as "D"

2. Relevant . . . could be unclear. . . . With my understanding I wouldn't know how to answer this . . . every church surely must have "d" but not necessarily "D"
3. Relevant, clear and insightful. Very interest how few churches have text detailing deacons among them
4. Ahhhh, very relevant and clear - maybe too clear. I Timothy 3 requirements must be reconciled with Phoebe in Romans 16 . . . hence my distinction between "d" and "D" (Phoebe is clearly a server but must not be one who leads all serving in a large congregation)

NOTE: I see this whole issue as the ongoing consistency in NT to use church life to reinforce the biblical pattern for home life rather than to complicate it.

5. Relevant and important in showing that the NT ekklesia is different than Israel. Clear. Someone with a covenant theology background could get tripped up here.
6. I Tim 3 referring to "D" - though all believers are called to live holy lives
7. Clear, relevant, and the key to getting this whole subject right theologically
8. Clear and relevant . . . may begin to make evident how much of common church polity is cultural and traditional rather than textual
9. Clear but could stir up the difference between "d" and "D"
10. Clear, relevant, see my remarks on #1
11. Clear, but I would wonder if Acts 6 comes up. The requirements in Acts 6 differ from I Tim 3 so I think most readers might think Acts 6 when answering this question . . . is that accurate to do so?
12. VERY RELEVANT . . . exposes a huge problem in many churches where high rollers run the second board . . . incredibly unscriptural!
13. Very clear and remarkably relevant. Another harmful misconstruing of deacon work that needs to be addressed broadly
14. Interesting . . . maybe worded a little vaguely. "Not a novice" but serving probably wasn't the purview of the elderly either. Taking care of widows must have included doing some physical labor do help them . . . good strong back normally required
15. Very good clear question. "D" is not an administrative office at its core. . . . I see it as a field lieutenant who gets his hands duty helping people (primarily widows) in NT with real life needs
16. Maybe be the least compelling question on questionnaire. If you define "d" and or "D" and size of congregation, one might be able to accurately answer this.
17. You are brave! Textually this question reveals the horridly weak underbelly of many Baptists. This one might need a follow up question, or a lead up....what is the relationship between pastor and deacons in NT text?
18. Maybe a little unclear. I would argue that "d" may have little leadership but "D" needs some as reflected in requirements of I Tim 3. But ""means" is confusing unless looking for a lexicon definition—which would make this a real simple question to answer
19. Question requires some sophisticated thinking by responder. Again, to my mind, highlights the important difference between "d" and "D"
20. Very GOOD clear question and theologically and practically important. I Tim 3:1 sets the tone for both bishop and deacon (D) . . . Excellent discussion starter, too
21. Wow . . . tough one—I Tim 3, certainly not "d" but "D"? Very complicated concept to address in this type of survey
22. Very relevant and important, and a theological correcting yardstick, if you will.

23. Clear and basic . . . I Tim 3

24. Good conversation but may be too complicated for just one question? At least includes Deacons wives as text does!

25. Good practical question, but what text would support this . . . are you blending "deacons and elders"?

Additional note: Would like to have seen you deal with the term/tenure of "D"

APPENDIX 5

DEACONS—THE CHURCH’S SERVANT LEADERS: TRAINING LESSONS

Lesson 1: “The Need” Acts 6:1-7

Why were there deacons in the first place? Did the first churches have deacons because church organization called for them or was there a more practical reason for their service and position?

I. ORIGIN OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON: Text

- A. This passage does not specifically say that the seven men appointed were deacons:
 - 1. The assumption by much of Christianity for much of church history is that these were indeed the first deacons.
 - 2. For the purpose of our study, we will assume that these men were at the least models for those men who would serve as deacons after them.
- B. If these men were deacons, then the position goes back to the earliest times in New Testament churches:
 - 1. The events of Acts 6 probably occurred less than two years after Jesus’ resurrection.
 - 2. The organization in the first church, located in Jerusalem was minimal.
 - 3. We are looking at formation events in our text.
- C. What stands out is that the creation of the position occupied by the seven men was driven by a need:
 - 1. Hellenistic widows were being overlooked in the distribution of goods and the exercise of care.
 - 2. To address the lacking in provision and care, seven godly men were appointed to oversee these things.
 - 3. We see here that the early church, under the oversight of the Apostles, felt liberty to appoint qualified people to address needs, even though Jesus had not himself set a for such a designation.

II. DEACONS HISTORICALLY:

- A. Early history:
 - 1. We know from Scripture that at least some first century churches had deacons:
 - a. There were deacons in the church at Philippi according to Philippians 1:1
 - b. Paul gave qualifications for deacons when writing to Timothy who was at Ephesus:
 - 1) This suggests that the church at Ephesus either had deacons or was contemplating instituting the office within their assembly.

- 2) Paul certainly saw the deacon as a common office for his language in 1 Timothy 3 does not suggest a new or unheard of thing.
 2. We do not know that every first century church had deacons:
 - a. They are not named at the churches in Crete, Galatia, Rome, Corinth, Colosse or Thessalonica.
 - b. Though absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, we cannot say with any certainty that these churches had deacons in their assemblies.
 3. At best we can say with confidence that some churches had deacons during the first century.
- B. Through the centuries and up until modern times:
1. These were years when Roman Catholicism held sway:
 - a. The Roman church evolved through the centuries.
 - b. Along with this evolution, offices within the church evolved.
 - c. The Roman and Greek Catholic churches both had the office of deacon though what defined the office was often quite different from what one might see in a protestant church.
 2. Beginning with the reformation, protestant denominations began to form and along with these new movements were differing forms of church government:
 - a. With different forms of church government came different offices.
 - b. Deacons certainly existed in these churches though not universally.

III. IN MODERN TIMES AMONG BAPTIST CHURCHES:

- A. As far back as Baptist church history goes, deacons have been a common office in the majority of Baptist churches:
 1. This is not to say that every Baptist church has and has had deacons.
 2. But the office of deacon is certainly a biblically accepted office among Baptists.
- B. Certainly the role of deacon has differed among Baptist churches:
 1. In some churches they are little more than figureheads.
 2. In some churches the deacons serve as a board that governs the church.
 3. One will also find churches where deacons function somewhere in between the above two extremes.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Deacons have been a visible part of church life since the earliest days of church history.
- B. Though their roles have varied, they have always filled a role in church life.
- C. In modern day Baptist church life, deacons fill a scripturally accepted part in church government and life.

Lesson 2: “What Is a Scriptural Leaders?” **John 13:1-6, Matthew 20:20-28**

In today’s lesson we will look at God’s biblical principle for leadership among his people. We will then see that Jesus himself fleshed this principle out. Last, we will observe this leadership principle in church life.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP:

Matthew 20:25-28

- A. Notice the context of Jesus’ instruction: vs. 20-24
 - 1. The disciples often competed for their places in Jesus coming kingdom. Matt. 18:1-4, Mark 9:34, Luke 9:46, 22:24-26.
 - 2. Like so many of us, the apostles were concerned about being elevated above their peers and they longed to have authority over their fellows.
 - 3. The world considers this kind of ambition to be a good thing, but what does God say?
- B. The relevance of Jesus’ lesson to the twelve:
 - 1. These men would one day exercise extraordinary authority and power among believers.
 - 2. The spirit in which they exercised this power would impact those who followed them.
 - 3. Would Christianity become a movement of strong men forcing their will on the weaker?
 - 4. Or would they model humility and a servant spirit to a movement of humble servants?
 - 5. Jesus made it plain that God would have the latter, just as Jesus was modeling for them.
- C. The application for us:
 - 1. We are, as leaders in God’s church, to follow the example of Jesus and the twelve.
 - 2. We are to lead by serving.
 - 3. Holding offices in a New Testament church is not about self-promotion or the enjoyment of the perks of leadership.
 - 4. God would have us labor for the interests of those whom we serve by leading.

II. THE PATTERN: John 13:1-16

- A. The pattern Jesus set here is one of radical servanthood:
 - 1. The most menial job in a home was to wash people’s dirty feet and that job was assigned to the lowest servant:
 - a. Jesus willingly placed himself in the place of the lowly to do the work of the lowly as an example to his future leaders.
 - b. Jesus was showing that there was to be no job below the servant leader.
 - 2. The twelve were to follow this pattern in their future ministries:
 - a. As we have seen, their tendency was not toward serving and this spirit did not follow their instincts.
 - b. Nor was this the pattern for leadership in their day.
 - c. When they joined in following Jesus, they apparently expected to be men of power and position.

- d. Jesus communicated to them in both instruction and by example that the positions and power they were to assume did not include the current model of leadership that they saw in the world.
- 3. Jesus set a supra-cultural pattern that day:
 - 1. His instructions were not for the apostles only.
 - 2. This example has been his model of leadership since the earliest days of the church.
 - 3. In every century, in every culture, in every church, God has designed that his leaders lead from a servant's spirit.

III. THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Acts 6:1-7

- A. The standout activity for these seven leading men is that they were chosen to serve:
 - 1. The apostles were so otherwise occupied that it was not appropriate for them to leave off of their present duties to serve tables.
 - a. So seven men were selected to tend to those matters which was serving tables.
 - b. Serving was their primary task.
 - 2. Seven of the most outstanding, spiritual men in the assembly were chosen and set apart to be in charge of serving.
- B. They literally led by serving:
 - 1. If someone had a question or need concerning the supply for a widow, that person went to one of the seven:
 - a. These men were charged with this ministry.
 - b. They were the leaders where ministry toward widows was concerned.
 - 2. Yet their entire responsibility could be summed up in serving:
 - a. They were not seeing to their own needs, their own desires and they were not given positions of ease.
 - b. They labored for the good and for the needs of those who were needier than themselves.
- C. Deacons must be the leading example of servanthood in their local church setting:
 - 1. The church does not place men in this position to be on a ruling board.
 - 2. Men do not hold the office of deacon as an honorary position to reward long faithfulness, large giving or strong financial abilities in the church.
 - 3. Deacons are chosen to serve those who need to be served:
 - a. To meet needs that need to be met.
 - b. To humble themselves for the glory of God.
 - c. Deacons must never engage in a contest over who may be the greatest.

Lesson 3: “Qualifications” 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Today we turn to the subject of who is qualified to serve as a deacon. As we begin this lesson we must bear in mind that these requirements were written two thousand years ago, in another language and to people of another culture. There is thus some disagreement concerning just what the author intended in some of these qualifications. This passage will be taught from our best understanding relying on the Holy Spirit’s leadership

I. THERE ARE STANDARDS: vs. 8a

- A. Notice that deacons *must* be the following things:
 - 1. Paul was not saying here that deacons must be sinlessly perfect in each of these areas.
 - 2. He was not insisting that each deacon must have always been flawless in each of the areas named.
 - 3. Paul’s is saying that a deacon or candidate for deacon must be characterized by the following traits:
 - a. We all fail at times.
 - b. But our lives should be known for being consistent in the areas Paul names.
- B. Notice also that deacons and candidates for deacon *must* be characterized by the following traits:
 - 1. This is not a fond wish or ideal.
 - 2. The language here does not tell us that these are things we should aspire to.
 - 3. They are necessary traits for anyone who would serve as a deacon in a New Testament church.

II. THE CHARISTICS OF A QUALIFIED DEACON: vs. 8b-9 &11-12

- A. First a deacon must live with dignity:
 - 1. This mean worthy of respect or honor.
 - 2. A deacon should be a man who reasonable people would view as living a life worthy of admiration.
- B. He must not be double-tongued:
 - 1. He must not be a repeater.
 - 2. He is to be a person who is careful in his speech, not saying inappropriate things.
- C. Not addicted to much wine:
 - 1. There is some disagreement here as to whether Paul intended total abstinence from alcohol or simply living in control where alcohol is concerned.
 - 2. Certainly a person with a drinking problem is not qualified to serve as a deacon.
- D. Not greedy of dishonest gain:
 - 1. This is a person who always looks for an angle to make profit in every exchange and act.
 - 2. This qualification is closely akin to the previous one. A deacon must not be controlled by his desires and appetites.
- E. He must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience:
 - 1. Though a deacon is not required to teach the truths of the faith, he certainly must hold to them.

2. They must be more than on his lips, they must be in his heart.
3. A deacon must know the faith and genuinely hold to it in his life.

F. Deacon's wives: vs. 11

1. This is another passage where there is some disagreement as to meaning:
 - a. Some good believers believe that women should be allowed to be deacons and that this passage actually addresses women candidates for the office.
 - b. For our purposes and in keeping with long understanding of this passage among Baptists, we will hold that this passage does address the wives of deacons.
 - c. Deacons are often required to enter situations where the company of a wife is advisable:
 - 1) In this case, the wife must be trustworthy and of good character.
 - 2) Thus Paul addresses this important issue.
2. Deacons wives are to be:
 - a. Dignified – as are the deacons.
 - b. Not slanderers – she must have control of her speech where fellow believers are concerned.
 - c. Sober-minded – she must live a life of temperance and self control.
 - d. Faithful in all things – she must be trustworthy and dependable, especially where the faith is concerned.

G. Deacons and their families: vs. 12

1. He must be the husband of one wife – literally a one-woman man. He must be a faithful husband.
2. Managing their children . . . well – he is to be a good father who properly disciplines and loves his children.
3. Managing their . . . own households well – these are physical aspects of a home; finances, and the physical plant where his family lives, the possessions God has loaned him.
4. In short, the deacon should have a credible home life.

III. TESTING: vs. 10

A. They are to be tested first:

1. They are not to be appointed or elected to this office without it first being ascertained that they meet the listed qualifications to serve.
2. Churches are to be careful that only qualified men hold this office in their assembly.

B. How is this testing to be conducted?

1. The scripture does not tell us.
2. Churches use varying methods to conduct this testing:
 - a. Some churches issue a questionnaire.
 - b. Some churches conduct interviews with the candidate.
 - c. Some churches may actually do an independent investigation concerning the candidate by checking background and interviewing associates and acquaintances.
3. In our church we required that a proposed deacon prove his faithfulness in the assembly before being considered as a candidate:
 - a. Then he is twice interviewed by the pastor with special attention to 1 Timothy 3 qualifications.

- b. Finally he is expected to submit to five lessons on serving as deacon.
- c. If all of these requirements are successfully met, the candidate is put forth to be a new deacon.

IV. THE DEACON'S REWARD: vs. 13

- A. A faithful deacon gains a good standing for himself:
 - 1. People who witness a faithful deacon will respect his labor and be favorably impressed with his service.
 - 2. People generally are well impressed with those who lovingly exercise a servant's spirit.
- B. A faithful deacon gains great confidence in the Christian faith:
 - 1. This statement speaks to the deacon's personal life more than his reputation.
 - 2. He will gain personal confidence in what he believes and the God whom he serves.
 - 3. The important thing to know is that there is reward for the faithful deacon:
 - a. The reward is not monetary.
 - b. The reward is not found in power over others.
 - c. The true reward though is very gratifying to the godly servant of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Accepting men as candidates for deacon is not something a church should entertain lightly.
- B. Presenting oneself as a candidate for deacon is not something an individual should do lightly.
- C. Deacons are important servants who must be first tested to show that they are the right men for the job.

Lesson 4: “The Deacon’s Job” Acts 6:1-7

We have looked at the need for deacons in a local church setting, a biblical description of a servant leader and biblical qualifications for a deacon. In this lesson we will examine the actual job of a New Testament deacon. What does a deacon do?

I. THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: text

- A. Our only example of deacons functioning in scripture is found in Acts 6:1-7:
 - 1. 1 Timothy 3 gives us qualifications for the office but no job description.
 - 2. The only other place in scripture that deacons are named is Philippians 1:1 and again there is no job description, only the naming of the office.
- B. The prompting for the creation of the position:
 - 1. Widows from a certain segment of the congregation were being neglected where giving out of supplies was concerned.
 - 2. In short, there was a need that was not being met.
 - 3. This need was genuine but was beyond the scope of the present organization in the first church and more than the ruling elders could reasonably personally address.
- C. The answer to the need:
 - 1. Men were appointed to serve the congregation by meeting this need.
 - 2. The first church added and adapted to address needs that were caused by growth and the general nature of differing people worshiping and dwelling together.

II. BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS:

- A. There are no commands concerning deacons in the New Testament beyond the qualifications for the office:
 - 1. Not to individuals:
 - a. We have qualifications for the position.
 - b. But there is no command as to job description, limitations or minimums.
 - 2. Not to churches
 - a. Churches are not commanded to have deacons in their congregations
 - b. Churches who have deacons are not commanded concerning what they were to do.
 - 3. There is not one place, other than Acts 6:1-7, where a job description is given:
 - a. Even then, the description is vague.
 - b. We are simply told that men were appointed to be over this business.
- B. We have no record that all New Testament churches had deacons:
 - 1. We know the church at Philippi had them.
 - 2. We can assume the first church in Jerusalem had them.
 - 3. Apparently the church at Ephesus had them for instruction concerning qualifications for the position were given to Timothy who was leading there.
 - 4. Beyond these three churches we do not know that deacons were a part of church organization, though they could have been.
 - 5. Truthfully, there is much we do not know about the position and nature of the office of deacon from the New Testament.

III. THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE:

- A. There are two extremes where the interpretation of scriptural information on deacons is concerned:
 - 1. Some churches hold that deacons may only do what the deacons in Acts 6:1-7 did:
 - a. They are to be over the care of widows.
 - b. They are to do nothing beyond caring for widows, for anything more has no biblical mandate.
 - 2. Some churches hold that Acts 6:1-7 tells us that a church has the right to create any new position or office to meet any need:
 - a. They believe that Acts 6:1-7 creates a pan-cultural principle.
 - b. Not only may new positions be created but old positions may be redefined.
- B. There is a middle ground:
 - 1. This middle ground holds that there may certainly be some fluidity within the job description of a deacon or even an elder.
 - 2. But this fluidity must remain within the bounds of the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:
 - a. It would not be appropriate to alter qualifications for the position to accommodate altering the position itself.
 - b. For instance, it would not be appropriate to require deacons to be Bible teachers because they are not biblically required to be qualified to be Bible teachers.
 - 3. All of the above must be done in the spirit of servant leaders, over everything, deacons are servants:
 - a. We must bear in mind that the word *deacon* is a translation of a Greek work meaning servant.
 - b. These New Testament deacons were servant hearted men, chosen to lead out.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Our church will fall into the middle ground where the job description of a deacon is concerned.
- B. In our next lesson we will give an overview of a deacon's responsibility at Tanglewood Baptist Church.

Lesson 5: “The Tanglewood Deacon”

We have seen deacons biblically, historically and culturally. In this lesson we will address how deacons will be employed at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. What will they oversee and how will they serve?

I. TANGLEWOOD’S NEEDS:

- A. We have people in our church who need assistance and attention:
 - 1. We have a significant number of widows and single mothers in our church.
 - 2. We have elderly couples and singles who sometimes need help.
 - 3. There are new members who do not have many friends and cannot yet network among our people.
- B. There are also people who may otherwise fall through the cracks, so to speak:
 - 1. They may miss services without being noticed.
 - 2. They may go through difficulties in life without their church knowing.
 - 3. Sometimes people have hospital stays and need attention from the leadership of the church.
- C. We need people who will systematically look after our flock:
 - 1. Keep track of who is present and who is not.
 - 2. Know when crises rise in the lives of members.
 - 3. The more our church grows the more important this kind of care will become.
 - 4. We must organize to meet these needs or some of them will not be met.

II. HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THESE NEEDS:

- A. First there will be a division of care concerning the membership at Tanglewood:
 - 1. We will divide the membership of the church into five roughly equal parts.
 - 2. We will take care to roughly keep the number of widows, single mothers and elderly members in need of watch-care equal within the five groups.
 - 3. Each of our five deacons will be given one of the five groups to watch and care for:
 - a. As we grow in number and the need arises, we will increase our number of deacons to ensure that each person in need is properly cared for without overtaxing our serving deacons.
 - b. Our desire is to keep less visible members from being neglected in daily ministry.
- B. Each deacon’s task concerning his assigned members:
 - 1. To watch each Sunday for attendance on the part of his charges:
 - a. After a second absence a call should be made for the purpose of information and encouragement.
 - b. By God’s grace, crises will not go unnoticed if absences are noticed and investigated.
 - 2. Look for needs:
 - a. Needy widows sometimes need help with yard work, home repair, rides to the store.
 - b. Elderly members often have the needs of the widows and are unable to meet these needs for themselves.

- c. Single mothers often need a good male role model for their children and someone to make sure their children have opportunities to attend ball games and amusement parks. They may need a godly man to be at their school programs and graduations.
 - d. Someone needs to be watching in a loving manner to identify struggles that members sometimes go through. Members can be strengthened when we are aware of their spiritual struggles.
3. Deacons must move to meet these needs:
- a. He can be sure the home repairs are done.
 - b. He can provide help or see that needed rides are offered.
 - c. The deacon should report struggles, especially those that are beyond his ability to address to the pastoral staff.
 - d. At times two or more deacons may need to work together to address a larger need.

CONCLUSION:

- A. We must organize for needs.
- B. We must also organize for future growth.
- C. In the ways described above we can accomplish several things:
 - 1. Our deacons may serve within the parameters of the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13
 - 2. Our deacons may lead out before our congregation in a great example of servant spirits.
 - 3. Real and growing needs will be met in our congregation.
 - 4. People who are sometimes otherwise ignored and needs that are otherwise missed will be addressed in a loving, biblical way.

APPENDIX 6

DEACONS—THE CHURCH’S SERVANT LEADERS: EVALUATION SHEET

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

APPENDIX 7

DEACONS—THE CHURCH’S SERVANT LEADERS: EVALUATION RESPONSES

Evaluation by Gary Kniseley

Lesson 1

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

- The material presented is founded in a primary text that is building the foundation of the office of deacon, which provides a helpful framework in terms of function.
- Looking at the material from its origin, use in the New Testament, and use today is helpful in determining the value of a deacon.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

- There appears to be no deviation from the biblical text.
- Good observations that deacons may not have been needed in every church and not every church identified having deacons. It would appear to be necessitated by need.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

- The text appears to give the privilege of choosing these deacons to the disciples or those in the congregation. The apostles affirmed, prayed, and laid hands on these men. Is this important? Should it be practiced in this way?
- Who should do the choosing today and who is praying over these men?

Lesson 2

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

- Laid out well with good biblical illustrations of servanthood.
- This lesson will be easy to understand and apply to the current position of deacon.
- The flow of information is good.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

- There is no concern about doctrinal consistency in this lesson.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

- The passages of Scripture are good, applicable, and useful. In Matthew 20:28, while providing an example of servanthood in the person of Jesus Christ, how did Christ serve and how was giving his life as a ransom for many an act of servanthood? The point that you make is biblical and accurate but there is an opportunity to go to an illustration with Christ as given in Philippians 2:5-8.

Lesson 3

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

* A good flow exists through the passage that brings about a good opportunity for application.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

* There is freedom as mentioned in the interpretation of some of the cultural issues at hand. You have done a good job explaining the passage but my only question would be if you felt your lesson was consistent with the earlier passage in Acts 6. Acts 6 shows a heavy involvement of the congregation seeking out these men but it appears to be driven by the pastor in the material you developed. Perhaps you understand a greater freedom for each church to exercise their selection of deacons.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

* Do the deacons see their accountability to the pastor or the congregation in terms of their function?

* Should the deacons be chosen for their ability to work with the building, money, or administrative gifts or is the focus just on moral character and living above reproach?

* According to this lesson, would deacon choices hinge on the area of service that needs to be addressed or managed? Are all the men capable of serving for every task in today's

Lesson 4

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

- The flow of information makes sense and it is very practical in nature.
- Honesty to the text is given and clarity in thought is understood.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

- Good work has been done and is consistent throughout your project. Coming back to the primary passage in Acts 6 is good and needed. Your theology appears to be consistent and in accord with supporting passages.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

- I believe that an explanation of the very term deacon in the Greek language could serve as a good tool to help the men understand that their role by definition is servant driven and supported by the example of Jesus Christ.
- The example of Christ shows the extreme spirit of servant-mindedness to the point of the cross (Phil. 2:5-8).

- It would appear that by the development in your lessons that the role of deacon is purely servant driven and not one to assist with the spiritual direction of the church. Setting clear parameters for your deacons will serve to eliminate any confusion of their roll and function for the future—such as ministry direction, vision, or philosophy. I would suspect that this would all rest upon the pastor base off of the less

Lesson 5

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

- * Good flow of information and very practical in nature for Tanglewood.
- * Simple and not overwhelming in terms of doing the task.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

- * These steps represent a servant heart and concern for the body of Christ. They support the previous lessons.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

- * At times it is necessary to identify a legitimate need that the deacons / church should be responsible to fulfill. I imagine the deacons will work together to decipher those needs. It could be noted that immediate family members, who are not at the church, should be considered to help meet these needs if possible before the burden falls upon the church. I understand that this does not mean that family will always help out. It is difficult to determine legitimacy at times and the duration of time that a need will be met—perhaps indefinitely.

Evaluation by David Melton

Lesson 1

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

This lesson is very teachable. The information is laid out plainly and progresses logically from: what a deacon is, what they've done historically, and what they will specifically be doing in a Baptist church. The logical structure and progression of the lesson will make it easy for a student to follow as well. This lesson will give a good informational foundation for what a deacon's responsibilities will be.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

The material in the lesson is doctrinally consistent throughout. The conclusion gives a quick summary of the material and does not contradict the key passage of the lesson.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

The lesson flows well and will be effective. I would suggest having the men read the passage before the first meeting and answer some questions given by the instructor prior to the reading.

Lesson 2

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

The lesson is clear and easily teachable. There is one central focus, and that is deacons should be servants. Each section begins with an example in a passage of scripture. That passage is explained, and then application is made. The format is simple and effective. This should be a useful tool in showing the deacons what their purpose is.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

There are 3 passages given in this lesson. Each passage is treated with respect and keeps the meaning consistent with scripture.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

Finish the lesson with the deacons beginning to pray for God to show them service opportunities within their office, and to be able to lead well through service.

Lesson 3

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

The lesson follows the same progression as the passage of scripture with the exception of verse 10. The content for verse 10 follows the characteristics and expectations of the deacons and their wives. Its placement allows similar content to be grouped together. There should be some specific situations laid out in which a man should take his wife.

The flow and lay out of the lesson make it fairly simple to teach on.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

There are a few spots in this passage from which debate could arise in regards to alcohol and females holding the position of deacon. I do believe this lesson is consistent with scripture and also within the tradition and historical interpretation of the Baptist church.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

Be prepared for any discussion that may arise. An effective part of this lesson could involve the deacons going through qualifications for wife and family with his own wife and family at home.

Lesson 4

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

This lesson is very teachable and content clear. The content gives deacons a vague notion of what to expect in their office. That is due to the fact that the description of a deacon is vague in scripture.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

The lesson is scripturally consistent and ties in well to the other lessons.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

In anticipation of the next week's lesson, have the deacons make a list of anticipated expectations, or duties that deacons have in other similar Baptist churches.

Lesson 5

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

This lesson will be fairly simple to teach. The problem is presented in the first half, then the solution the next. It is a logical progression of content and will be easy to follow. Expectations for men are clearly laid out and should be easy to grasp.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

There is no scripture presented in this lesson. It is a list expectation for Tanglewood Baptist Church specifically. It does tie into the previous lesson where deacons work a middle ground of the expectations for the office of deacon. However, the tasks and expectations are consistent with the character of a Biblical Christian.

2. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

Lay out some specific limitations to the office and possible areas the men should not be involved in or should pass it to the pastor.

Have a list of expectations or copy of the lesson to hand the men to keep with them and share with their wives who will be involved in the ministry as well.

Evaluation by David Cadena

Lesson 1

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

The historical history is important. Do the teachers have enough church history under their belts to do II. B?

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

OK – I would only comment that the “evolution” of deacon ministry seems to be connected to the size of the size of the congregation.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

B. 3 Find a word other than “things.”

I think it might be good to use for preconceptions about what it means to be a deacon.

Lesson 2

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

Is this lesson longer than #1?

3. important Scripture passages.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

Excellent to include the model of Jesus.

III. C. is particularly important! Very strong.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

The requirements are interesting – “good report” must suggest honesty.
They would necessarily handle money to buy food for the widows.

Lesson 3

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

This lesson is *full* of hotly debated issues. Only a person who has put in some time can do justice to this.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

II E is *huge!* Not necessarily a teacher.

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

Double tongued, a good etymology, would be helpful.

Good distinction about the textual latitude for the *selection process* – it should be practical

Lesson 4

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluation that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

Maybe harder than 1-3

Not as obvious as to where the lesson will go.

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

I C 1. “appointed to serve”?

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

I would suggest defining the term “deacon”

Lesson 5

Below is the evaluation sheet for this lesson. Please bear in mind as you evaluate that this is an outline, not a manuscript. Please also bear in mind that these lessons are church specific. They are designed for deacons and prospective deacons at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. They are not intended to address convictions or organizational structure in other churches.

1. Comments on the teachability of the lessons:

Very practical – the *most* accessible of all lessons

2. Comments on doctrinal consistency of material presented:

3. General suggestions to make this lesson more effective:

My only question is term of service – is this a permanent job or for a season?

Are there guidelines for a married man helping a single woman?

APPENDIX 8

DEACONS—THE CHURCH’S SERVANT LEADERS: LESSON WORKBOOK



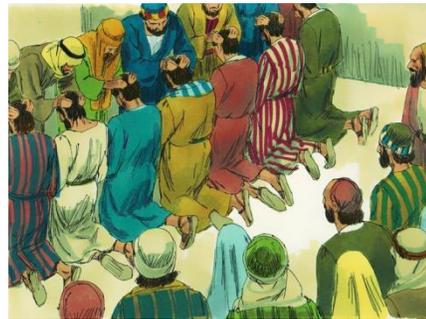
Lesson 1: “The Need” Acts 6:1-7

Why were there deacons in the first place? Did the first churches have deacons because church organization called for them or was there a more practical reason for their service and position?

I. ORIGIN OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON: Text

A. This passage _____ specifically say that the seven men appointed were deacons:

1. The _____ by much of Christianity for much of church history is that these were indeed, the first deacons.
2. For the purpose of our study, we will assume that these men were at the least _____ for those men who would serve as deacons after them.



B. If these men were deacons, then the position goes back to the _____ times in New Testament churches:

1. The events of Acts 6 probably occurred less than _____ years after Jesus’ resurrection.
2. The _____ in the first church, located in Jerusalem was minimal.
3. We are looking at formation events in our text.

C. What stands out is that the creation of the position occupied by the seven men was driven by a _____:

1. Hellenistic widows were being _____ in the distribution of goods and the exercise of care.
2. To address the _____ provision and care, _____ godly men were appointed to oversee these things.
3. We see here that the early church, under the oversight of _____, felt liberty to _____ qualified people to address needs, even though Jesus himself had not set a _____ for such a designation.

II. DEACONS HISTORICALLY:



A. Early history:

1. We know from Scripture that _____ first century churches had deacons:
 - a. There were deacons in the church at _____ according to Philippians 1:1
 - b. Paul gave _____ for deacons when writing to Timothy who was at Ephesus:
 - 1) This suggests that the church at Ephesus either had deacons or was contemplating _____ the office within their assembly.
 - 2) Paul certainly saw _____ as a common office. His language in 1 Timothy 3 does not suggest a new or unheard of thing.
2. We do not know that every first century church had deacons:
 - a. They are not named at the churches in Crete, Galatia, Rome, Corinth, Colosse or Thessalonica.
 - b. Though absence of evidence is not _____ of absence, we cannot say with any certainty that these churches had deacons in their assemblies.
3. At best we can say with confidence that _____ churches had deacons during the first century.



B. Through the centuries and up until modern times:

1. These were years when _____ held sway:
 - a. The Roman church evolved through the centuries.
 - b. Along with this evolution, offices within the church _____.
 - c. The Roman and Greek Catholic churches both had the office of _____ though what defined the _____ was often quite different from what one might see in a protestant church.
2. Beginning with the reformation, protestant denominations began to form and along with these new _____ were differing _____ of church government:
 - a. With different forms of church government came different offices.
 - b. _____ certainly existed in these churches though not universally.

III. IN MODERN TIMES AMONG BAPTIST CHURCHES:

- A. As far back as Baptist church history goes, deacons have been a _____ office in the _____ of
 1. This is not to say that every Baptist church has and has had deacons.
 2. But the office of deacon is certainly a _____ accepted office among Baptists.
- B. Certainly the role of deacon has differed among Baptist churches:
 1. In some churches they are little more than _____.
 2. In some churches the deacons serve as a board that _____ the church.
 3. One will also find churches where deacons function somewhere _____ the above two extremes.



CONCLUSION:



- A. Deacons have been a _____ part of church life since the earliest days of church history.
- B. Though their _____ have varied, they have always filled a role in church life.
- C. In modern day Baptist church life, deacons fill a _____ accepted part in _____ church government and life.

Lesson 2: “What Is a Scriptural Leader?”

John 13:1-16, Matthew 20:25-28

In today’s lesson, we will look at God’s biblical principle for leadership among his people. We will then see that Jesus himself fleshed this principle out. Last, we will observe this leadership principle in church life.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP:

Matthew 20:25-28



- A. Notice the context of Jesus’ instruction: vs. 20-24
 - 1. The _____ often competed for their places in Jesus coming kingdom. Matt. 18:1-4, Mark 9:34, Luke 9:46, 22:24-26.
 - 2. Like so many of us, the _____ were concerned about being elevated above their _____ and they longed to have _____ over their fellows.
 - 3. The _____ considers this kind of ambition to be a good thing, but what does _____ say?
- B. The relevance of Jesus’ lesson to the twelve:
 - 1. These men would one day exercise extraordinary _____ and _____ among believers.
 - 2. The _____ in which they exercised this power would impact those who followed them.
 - 3. Would Christianity become a movement of strong men _____ their _____ on the weaker?
 - 4. Or would they model _____ and a _____ spirit to a movement of humble servants?
 - 5. Jesus made it plain that God would have the latter, just as Jesus was _____ for them.
- C. The application for us:
 - 1. We are, as leaders in God’s church, to _____ of Jesus and the twelve.
 - 2. We are to _____.
 - 3. Holding offices in a New Testament church is not about _____ or the enjoyment of the _____ of leadership.

4. God would have us labor for the interests of those whom we _____ by leading.

II. THE PATTERN: John 13:1-16

A. The pattern Jesus set here is one of radical servanthood:

1. The most _____ job in a home was to wash people's dirty feet and that job was assigned to the lowest servant:

a. Jesus _____ placed himself in the place of the _____ to do the work of the _____ as an example to his future leaders.

b. Jesus was showing that there was to be no job below the _____ leader.



2. The twelve were to follow this pattern in their future ministries:

a. As we have seen, their tendency was not toward _____ and this _____ did not follow their instincts.

b. Nor was this the pattern for leadership in their day.

c. When they joined in following Jesus, they apparently _____ to be men of _____ and _____.

d. Jesus communicated to them in both _____ and by _____ that the positions and power they were to assume did not include the current model of leadership that they saw in the world.

3. Jesus set a supra-cultural pattern that day:

1. His _____ were not for the apostles only.

2. This example has been his model of leadership since the earliest days of the church.

3. In every century, in every culture, in every church, God has designed that his leaders lead from a _____ spirit.

III. THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Acts 6:1-7

A. The standout activity for these seven leading men is that they were _____ to serve:

1. The apostles were so otherwise occupied that it was not appropriate for them to leave off of their present duties to serve tables.

a. So seven men were selected to tend to those matters which was _____ tables.

b. Serving was their primary task.

2. Seven of the most outstanding, spiritual men in the assembly were _____ and set apart to be in charge of _____.

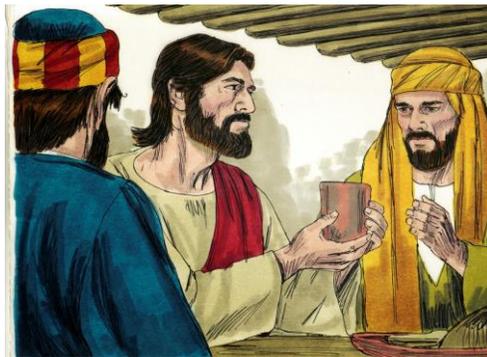
B. They literally led by _____:

1. If someone had a question or need concerning the supply for a widow, that person went to one of the seven:

a. These men were _____ with this ministry.

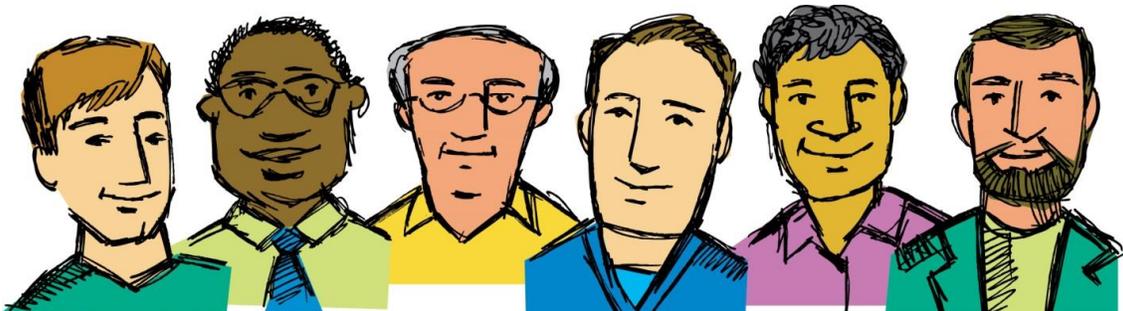


- b. They were the leaders where ministry toward widows was concerned.
- 2. Yet their entire responsibility could be summed up in _____:
 - a. They were not seeing to their own needs, their own desires and they were not given positions of ease.
 - b. They labored for the _____ and for the _____ of those who were needier than themselves.
- C. Deacons must be the _____ example of servanthood in their local church setting:
 - 1. The church does not place men in this position to be on a ruling board.
 - 2. Men do not hold the office of _____ as an _____ position to reward long faithfulness, large giving or strong financial abilities in the church.
 - 3. Deacons are chosen to _____ those who need to be served:
 - a. To meet _____ that need to be met.
 - b. To _____ themselves for the glory of God.
 - c. Deacons must never engage in a contest over who may be the greatest.



Lesson 3: “Qualifications” 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Today we turn to the subject of who is qualified to serve as a deacon. As we begin this lesson we must bear in mind that these requirements were written two thousand years ago, in another language and to people of another culture. There is thus some disagreement concerning just what the author intended in some of these qualifications.



This passage will be taught from our best understanding relying on the Holy Spirit's leadership.

I. THERE ARE STANDARDS: vs. 8a

- A. Notice that deacons _____ be the following things:
1. Paul was not saying here that deacons must be _____ perfect in each of these areas.
 2. He was not insisting that each deacon must have always been flawless in each of the areas named.
 3. Paul's is saying that a deacon or candidate for deacon must be _____ by the following traits:
 - a. We all fail at times.
 - b. But our lives should be known for being consistent in the areas Paul names.
- B. Notice also that deacons and candidates for deacon *must* be characterized by the following traits:
1. This is not a fond wish or ideal.
 2. The language here does not tell us that these are things we should _____ to.
 3. They are _____ traits for anyone who would serve as a deacon in a New Testament church.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A QUALIFIED DEACON: vs. 8b-9 & 11-12

- A. First a deacon must live with _____:
1. This mean worthy of _____ or honor.
 2. A deacon should be a man who reasonable people would view as living a life worthy of _____.
- B. He must not be double-tongued:
1. He must not be a repeater.
 2. He is to be a person who is _____ in his speech, not saying _____ things.
- C. Not addicted to much wine:
1. There is some disagreement here as to whether Paul intended total abstinence from alcohol or simply living in _____ where alcohol is concerned.
 2. Certainly a person with a drinking problem is not _____ to serve as a deacon.
- D. Not greedy of dishonest gain:
1. This is a person who always looks for an angle to make profit in every exchange and act.
 2. This qualification is closely akin to the previous one. A deacon must not be _____ by his _____ and appetites.
- E. He must hold the mystery of the faith with a _____ conscience:
1. Though a deacon is not required to teach the _____ of the faith, he certainly must hold to them.
 2. They must be more than on his lips, they must be in his _____.



3. A deacon must know the _____ and genuinely hold to it in his life.

F. Deacon's wives: vs. 11

1. This is another passage where there is some disagreement as to meaning:
 - a. Some good believers believe that _____ should be allowed to be deacons and that this passage actually addresses _____ candidates for the office.
 - b. For our purposes and in keeping with long understanding of this passage among Baptists, we will hold that this passage does address the _____ of deacons.
 - c. Deacons are often required to enter situations where the _____ of a wife is advisable:
 - 1) In this case, the wife must be _____ and of good _____.
 - 2) Thus Paul addresses this important issue.



- a. _____ – as are the deacons.
- b. Not slanderers – she must have _____ of her speech where fellow believers are concerned.
- c. Sober-minded – she must live a life of _____ and _____.
- d. Faithful in all things – she must be trustworthy and _____, especially where the faith is concerned.

G. Deacons and their families: vs. 12

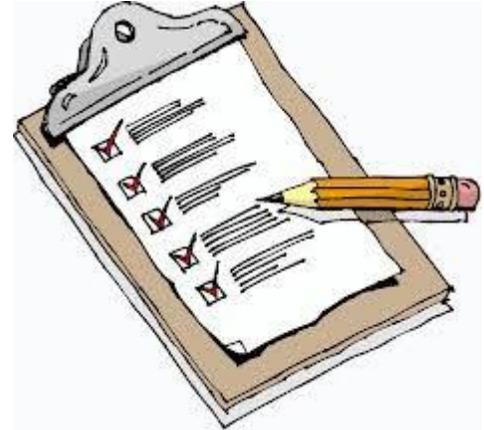
1. He must be the husband of _____ wife – literally a _____-woman man. He must be a _____ husband.
2. Managing their children . . . well – he is to be a good father who properly _____ and loves his children.
3. _____ their. . . own households well – these are physical aspects of a home; finances, and the physical plant where his family lives, the possessions God has loaned him.
4. In short, the deacon should have a _____ home life.

III. TESTING: vs. 10

- A. They are to be _____ first:
1. They are not to be appointed or elected to this office without it first being ascertained that they meet the listed _____ to serve.
 2. Churches are to be careful that only _____ men hold this office in their assembly.

B. How is this testing to be conducted?

1. The scripture does not tell us.
2. Churches use varying methods to conduct this testing:
 - a. Some churches issue a _____.
 - b. Some churches conduct _____ with the candidate.
 - c. Some churches may actually do an independent _____ concerning the candidate by checking background and interviewing associates and acquaintances.
3. In our church we required that a proposed deacon prove his _____ in the assembly before being considered as a candidate:
 - a. Then he is twice _____ by the pastor with special attention to 1 Timothy 3 qualifications.
 - b. Finally he is expected to _____ to five lessons on serving as deacon.
 - c. If all of these requirements are successfully met, the candidate is put forth to be a new deacon.



IV. THE DEACON'S REWARD: vs. 13



- A. A faithful deacon gains a good standing for himself:
 1. People who witness a _____ deacon will respect his labor and be favorably impressed with his service.
 2. People generally are well impressed with those who _____ exercise a servant's spirit.
- B. A faithful deacon gains great confidence in the Christian faith:
 1. This statement speaks to the deacon's _____ life more than his reputation.
 2. He will gain personal confidence in what he believes and the God whom he serves.
 3. The important thing to know is that there is _____ for the faithful deacon:
 - a. The _____ is not monetary.
 - b. The _____ is not found in power over others.
 - c. The _____ though is very gratifying to the godly servant of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Accepting men as candidates for deacon is not something a church should entertain lightly.
- B. Presenting oneself as a candidate for deacon is not something an individual should do lightly.

C. Deacons are important servants who must be _____ to show that they are the right men for the job.

Lesson 4: “The Deacon’s Job” Acts 6:1-7

We have looked at the need for deacons in a local church setting, a biblical description of a servant leader and biblical qualifications for a deacon. In this lesson we will examine the actual job of a New Testament deacon. What does a deacon do?



I. THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: text

- A. Our only example of deacons _____ in scripture is found in Acts 6:1-7:
1. 1 Timothy 3 gives us qualifications for the office but no job description.
 2. The only other place in scripture that deacons are named is Philippians 1:1 and again there is no job _____, only the naming of the office.
- B. The prompting for the _____ of the position:
1. Widows from a certain segment of the congregation were being neglected where giving out of supplies was concerned.
 2. In short, there was a _____ that was _____ being met.
 3. This need was _____ but was _____ the scope of the present organization in the first church and more than the ruling elders could reasonably personally address.
- C. The answer to the _____:
1. Men were appointed to _____ the congregation by meeting this _____.
 2. The first church added and adapted to address _____ that were caused by growth and the general nature of differing people worshipping and dwelling together.

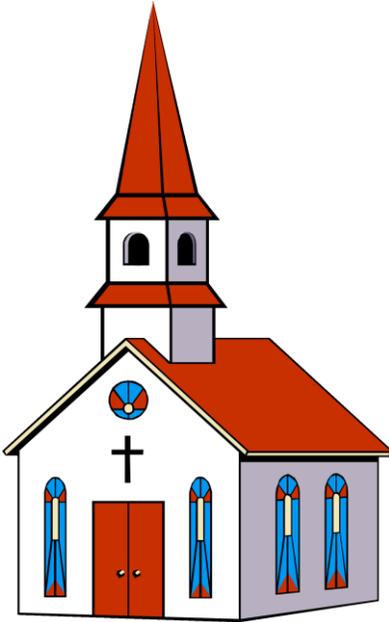
II. BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS:

A. There are _____ concerning deacons in the New Testament beyond the qualifications for the office:

1. Not to individuals:

- a. We have _____ for the position.
- b. But there is no _____ as to job description, limitations or minimums.

2. Not to churches



a. Churches are not _____ to have deacons in their congregations

b. Churches who have deacons are not _____ concerning what they were to do.

3. There is not one place, other than Acts 6:1-7, where a job _____ is given:

a. Even then, the _____ is vague.

b. We are simply told that men were _____ to be over this business.

B. We have no record that _____ New Testament churches had deacons:

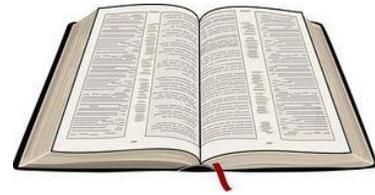
1. We know the church at Philippi had them.

2. We can assume the _____ church in Jerusalem had them.

3. Apparently the church at Ephesus had them for instruction concerning _____ for the position were given to Timothy who was leading there.

4. Beyond these three churches we do not know that deacons were a part of church organization, though they could have been.

5. Truthfully, there is much we do not know about the _____ and _____ of the office of deacon from the New Testament.



III. THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE:

A. There are two extremes where the interpretation of _____ information on deacons is concerned:

1. Some churches hold that deacons may only do what the deacons in Acts 6:1-7 did:

a. They are to be over the care of _____.

b. They are to do nothing beyond caring for _____, for anything more has no biblical mandate.

2. Some churches hold that Acts 6:1-7 tells us that a church has the right to _____ any new position or office to meet any _____:

a. They believe that Acts 6:1-7 creates a pan-cultural principle.

- b. Not only may new positions be created but old positions may be _____.
- B. There is a middle ground:
1. This middle ground holds that there may certainly be some fluidity within the job _____ of a deacon or even an elder.
 2. But this fluidity must remain within the bounds of the _____ given in 1 Timothy 3:
 - a. It would not be appropriate to alter _____ for the position to accommodate altering the position itself.
 - b. For instance, it would not be appropriate to _____ deacons to be Bible teachers because they are not _____ required to be qualified to be Bible teachers.
 3. All of the above must be done in the spirit of _____ leaders, over everything, deacons are _____:
 - a. We must bear in mind that the word *deacon* is a translation of a Greek work meaning servant.
 - b. These New Testament deacons were _____ hearted men, chosen to lead out.



CONCLUSION:

- A. Our church will fall into the middle ground where the job description of a deacon is concerned.
- B. In our next lesson we will give an overview of a deacon's responsibility at Tanglewood Baptist Church.

Lesson 5: “The Tanglewood Deacon”

We have seen deacons _____, and _____.
In this lesson we will address how deacons will be employed at Tanglewood Baptist Church in Odessa, TX. What will they oversee and how will they serve?



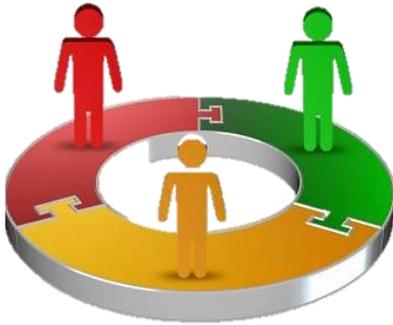
I. TANGLEWOOD’S NEEDS:

- A. We have people in our church who _____ assistance and attention:
1. We have a significant number of _____ and _____
_____ in our church.
 2. We have _____ couples and _____ who sometimes need help.
 3. There are _____ members who do not have many friends and cannot yet network among our people.
- B. There are also _____ who may otherwise fall through the cracks, so to speak:
1. They may miss services without being noticed.
 2. They may go through _____ in life without their church knowing.
 3. Sometimes people have _____ stays and _____ attention from the leadership of the church.
- C. We need people who will _____ look after our flock:
1. Keep track of who is _____ and who is not.
 2. Know when _____ rise in the lives of members.
 3. The more our church grows the more _____ this kind of care will become.
 4. We must _____ to meet these needs or some of them will not be met.

II. HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THESE NEEDS:

A. First there will be a _____ of care concerning the membership at Tanglewood:

1. We will divide the _____ of the church into five roughly _____ parts.
2. We will take care to roughly keep the number of widows, single mothers and elderly members in need of watch-care _____ within the five groups.
3. Each of our five deacons will be given one of the five groups to watch and care for:



- a. As we grow in number and the need arises, we will _____ our number of deacons to ensure that each person in need is _____ cared for without overtaxing our serving deacons.
- b. Our desire is to keep less visible members from being _____ in daily ministry.

B. _____ deacon's task concerning his assigned members:

1. To _____ each Sunday for _____ on the part of his charges:
 - a. After a second _____ a call should be made for the purpose of information and encouragement.
 - b. By God's grace, crises will not go unnoticed if _____ are noticed and _____.



2. _____ for needs:
 - a. _____ widows sometimes need help with yard work, home repair, rides to the store.
 - b. Elderly members often have the _____ of the widows and are unable to meet these needs for themselves.
 - c. Single mothers often _____ a good _____ _____ for their children and someone to make sure their children have opportunities to attend ball games and amusement parks. They may need a godly man to be at their school programs and graduations.
 - d. Someone needs to be _____ in a _____ manner to identify struggles that members sometimes go through. Members can be strengthened when we are aware of their _____ struggles.
3. Deacons must move to _____ these needs:
 - a. He can be sure the home repairs are done.
 - b. He can provide help or see that _____ rides are offered.

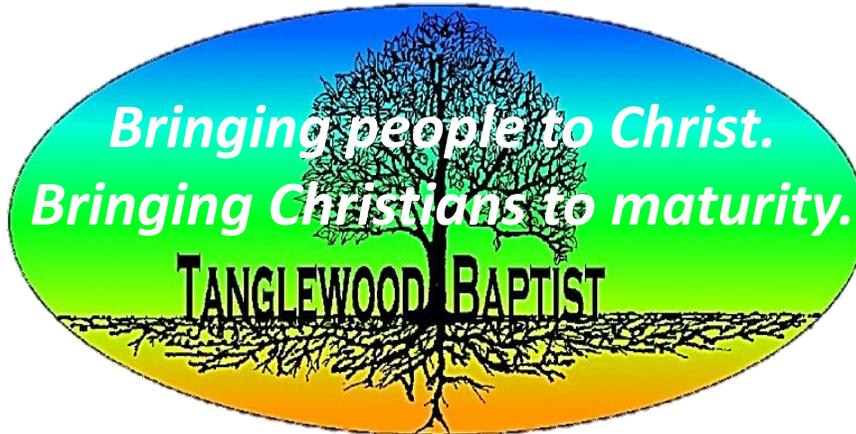
- c. The deacon should _____ struggles, especially those that are beyond his ability to address to the pastoral staff.
- d. At times two or more deacons may need to work _____ to address alarger need.



CONCLUSION:

- A. We must organize for _____.
- B. We must also organize for _____.

- C. In the ways described above we can accomplish several things:
 1. Our deacons may _____ within the parameters of the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13
 2. Our deacons may _____ out before our congregation in a great example of servant spirits.
 3. Real and _____ will be met in our congregation.
 4. People who are sometimes otherwise ignored and needs that are otherwise missed will be addressed in a _____, _____ way.



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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING DEACONS TO BE THE SERVANT LEADERS AT TANGLEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, ODESSA, TEXAS

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The purpose of this project was to biblically train and teach deacons of Tanglewood Baptist Church, Odessa, Texas, to share in supportive leadership to the senior pastor in both serving and leading the congregation.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the project and the church context that merits its implementation. Chapter 2 examines biblical teaching on the office of deacon and the responsibilities accompanying the office. Chapter 3 researches sources outside of Scripture concerning biblical leadership in local churches. Chapter 4 gives details of the preparation and implementation of the project. Chapter 5 contains reflections on the project, including strengths, weaknesses, future changes, and lessons learned.

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