

Doctrine of Deacon

1. From Philippians 1:1 it may be concluded that deacons (the word means, "servant") were one of the two main orders of ministry in the Apostolic Church.

- *Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

2. The general concept of Deacon as a servant of the Church is well established in both the Bible and Church history.

3. The Greek word diakonos is found about 30 times in Scripture and is used in a variety of ways. The word is used of:

- domestic servants

John 2:5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

John 2:9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom

- civil rulers

Romans 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

- Christ

Romans 15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

Galatians 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

- Christians

John 12:26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Ephesians 6:21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

Colossians 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

Colossians 4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

- Christians in relation to one another

Matthew 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

Matthew 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Mark 9:35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

Mark 10:43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

- Ministers of the gospel

1 Corinthians 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

2 Corinthians 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

2 Corinthians 6:4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

2 Corinthians 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

Ephesians 3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Colossians 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

Colossians 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

1 Thessalonians 3:2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

1 Timothy 4:6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

- Women who serve in the Church

Romans 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

and men as well

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

- False servants of Satan

2 Corinthians 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

- Angels

Matthew 22:13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

4. When the office of deacon was established in the New Testament Church, it may have paralleled the function of the Jewish synagogue assistant, an official who took care of the administrative needs of the assembly. The Deacons also assisted the priests in conducting the order of religious services.
5. It is often been taught that the origin of the office of deacon is described in Acts 6:1-6. However, nowhere in this passage is the word deacon used. What is stated is that a problem existed and was brought to the attention of the Apostles.
6. The young Christian Church in Jerusalem was experiencing growing pains. It had become increasingly difficult for the Apostles to distribute charitable gifts to its needy members without neglecting their ministry of prayer and preaching.
7. The widows of Greek or Gentile background complained to the apostles that they were not getting their just share of food and money.
8. To meet this critical need, the congregation was instructed by the Apostles to select seven men

- *Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.*
9. The selection was made. But again, notice that nothing is mentioned in this passage about Church rule or of an ongoing ministry.
 10. Nor is there anything in this portion of *Scripture* about an official office.
 11. What is stated is that seven men who were known to be spiritual individuals were to see that the material needs of the Greek ladies were not neglected. Meanwhile the Apostles would give themselves to the Word of God.
 12. The names of the seven men are given as Stephen, Philip Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. Two of these men, Stephen and Philip, later are found as evangelist.
 13. Stephen is described as a man "*full of faith and power*" who "*did great wonders and signs among the people*" (*Acts 6:8*).
 14. So convincing were his words and miracles that "*they were not able to resist the wisdom and Spirit by which he spoke*" (*Acts 6:10*).
 15. While some responded in faith, Stephen's zeal for Christ stirred up powerful enemies.
 - *Acts 6:11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:*
 16. Undaunted by false witnesses, Stephen glorified the Lord even as he was put to death for his convictions.
 - *Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*
 17. Phillip was also an evangelist who "*preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*" (*Acts 8:9-13*).

18. After preaching to eager crowds in Samaria, Phillip witnessed to a solitary Ethiopian in the desert and baptized him.

Acts 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

19. If the origin of the office of deacon is not precisely pinpointed in Acts 6, certainly the service rendered is in keeping with the duties of a Deacon.
20. The men in Acts 6 are described as "*men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*" (Acts 6:3).
21. And, they were formally installed or commissioned in a service of prayer and the laying on of hands by the Apostles, a practice still regarded today as the scriptural precedent for the ordination of Church officials.
- *Acts 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.*
22. As a result of the selection of these seven men harmony was restored in the congregation and the Church continued to grow in number and spirit.
- *Acts 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

23. The list of qualifications for Deacons given in (1 Timothy 3) shows that this servant of the Church was to be equipped for a spiritual ministry to serve with the bishop or pastor: "*Likewise Deacons must be*

- *reverent,*
- *not double-tongued,*
- *not given to much wine,*
- *not greedy for money,*
- *holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.*
- *But let these first be proved then let them serve as Deacons*
- *being found blameless" (1 Tim. 3:8-10).*

24. The deacon was expected to have an exemplary home life to be a proven leader, and to possess high character.

1 Timothy 3:11 Even so must their wives [lit. women]

- *be grave,*
- *not slanderers,*
- *sober,*
- *faithful in all things.*

12 Let the deacons be

- *the husbands of one wife,*
- *ruling their children*
- *and their own houses well.*

25. Paul wrote that the reward for faithfulness in the office of deacon is that they "*obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 3:13).*

26. The selfless deacon may feel a close fellowship with the Lord, who walked the earth as "*One who serves*" (Luke 22:27). According to Jesus, the true heroes in the kingdom of God are those who assume the role of diakonos, a servant. *Matthew 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.*