

Introductory Material

The Biblical Deacon Plan in a Local Church

Dr. J. Mike Minnix
j.mikeminnix@gmail.com

The deacon ministry has been largely misunderstood in local Baptist churches for many years. Some people view deacons as those who make decisions regarding personnel matters, budgets, finances, buildings and other issues in the church. Actually, that is a false view of who deacons are to be and what they are to do.

The first deacons were chosen because the pastors (apostles) asked for them. They were selected to help the pastors minister to the church family. They had absolutely nothing to do with areas of ministry where others were already involved, except in those areas where the pastors needed assistance. In essence, deacons were aides to the pastors and could have been considered lay staff people under the direction of the pastor or pastors.

The mistaken idea regarding deacons began during the industrial revolution. At that point in time, companies were being formed with boards, directors and chairmen who had some control over every function in the business. A president served to lead the day-to-day activity, but he was always under the supervision of the board of directors. If stock holders became unhappy with the way things were going in the company, they could contact a board member and ask that the president be informed that he needed to change the way he was operating. Sadly, churches adopted the language of business and began to call the deacons a board of deacons and the leader of the deacons a chairman. There is no such language in the Bible and no organization like that in the Bible.

Actually, deacons are to help the pastor minister to the church. The deacon leader (now called the chairman in many churches) is to serve with the pastor in organizing and leading the deacons to work in ways that help the pastor lead the church toward a divine vision. The pastor is the under-shepherd of the local church, with Christ being the Chief Shepherd. The deacons were never meant to be a position of control over a pastor. They are to help and assist him as he seeks to pray, study and preach God's Word in order that people might be saved, disciples that be developed and ministry might be accomplished.

The Biblical Deacon plan is a tool to help develop biblical deacons rather than business leaders in the church. Certainly there is room for committees or teams to help oversee matters in the church, i.e. Properties, Finances, Personnel, etc. But, deacons are servants along with the pastor to maintain unity in the body. It is unfortunate that many deacons

have been led to believe that their duty is to represent the church membership in making sure that the pastor or pastors of the church do exactly what the membership desires. This has led to a decline in church attendance, a horrible drop in baptisms among Baptist churches and has created much more disunity than it could ever cure.

If a deacon sees his role as representing church members complaints during deacon meetings, he is actually serving more like a politician than a biblical deacon. A senator or representative is voted into office to do the people's will; however, a deacon is to be voted into a position of ministry to aid the pastor and staff in accomplishing God's will. For a deacon to represent a constituency in the church is to court disaster. This leads deacons into conflict with the pastor, staff and with each other.

I have been a pastor/preacher for more than 45 years. About 25 years ago, I decided to work with a wonderful deacon named Dan Yoest to develop a truly biblical deacon process. The results were phenomenal. The unity of the church was sweet, the baptisms increased, the attendance grew, conflicts were either non-existent or handled quickly, and our deacons were the happiest and most faithful group of men I had ever known. However, it took some time to put the entire program into place. First, we had to write the material and guidelines based upon scripture. Secondly, we needed the church to agree that every deacon should be trained. Third, we had to get all existed deacons to go through the program. Lastly, we determined that no one could serve as a deacon in our church without completing The Biblical Deacon process.

I was amazed to see deacons going through The Biblical Deacon study without a whimper of complaint. Many of them were men in their fifties, sixties and some in their seventies. Some of them had served as deacons in churches for three or four decades. Every man who completed the program talked about how much it meant and how much it helped. All of the older men who completed the program shared a regret that such a program had not be available when they first began to serve as deacons.

I encourage you to carry out The Biblical Deacon ministry. Every Baptist church is autonomous and can decide how to do their programs and ministries. You can feel free to adopt and adapt the material within this plan to suit your church, your goals and your mission for our Lord. I can tell you that following the adoption of this plan in our church, our deacon meetings were like revival services. There was unity, prayer, praise, excitement and the joy of the Lord. That is what the deacon ministry is really all about.

Blessings to you as you consider The Biblical Deacon as a part of your church program. If you decide to do it, take your time. If you are a pastor reading this, be sure to get "buy in" from leadership. Some deacons who are serving may see the attempt to do this program as an attack on their power, character or independence. At every turn, you

must reveal the way deacons were first chosen and that every church should have a biblical and cultural basis for existence. In the early church, when a conflict arose, the pastors (apostles) were under attack. Deacons were chosen to force the pastors (apostles) to satisfy the complaints; they were chosen to satisfy the complaints and take them off the back of the pastors (apostles). The problem solvers were not the pastors (apostles) but the deacons. If all the deacons were to do was complain about the poor work the pastors (apostles) were doing, they were totally unneeded. The pastors (apostles) already had the problem of complaints and didn't need anyone else to make it worse. Deacons are to help the pastor(s) of the local church by being their helpers and not their managers. That is taught fully and correctly in The Biblical Deacon training material. Hopefully, you can implement this plan in your church and see the results that issue from it. It is my prayer that your ministry and that of your deacons brings glory to God, souls into the kingdom, growth to the body and unity to the church.

Dr. J. Mike Minnix
j.mikeminnix@gmail.com
www.sermoncity.com