

## Duties Of Deacons

### Preliminary Matters

1. The qualifications of deacons are given in 1 Timothy 3:8-14. (Refer to the sermon outline from 1.16.05 a.m. for a discussion of that passage.)
2. "Great caution must be exercised in appointing men to any office in the kingdom, one reason being it is so difficult to get the bad ones out" (Mac Layton, How To Build A Great Church in his chapter entitled, *The Lord's Work Is Done By Great Deacons*).
3. The scriptural order is as follows: **First** there is a job that needs to be done, and **then** a deacon is appointed to do *that job* (Acts 6:1-5). (This is the way to avoid having men who are deacons in name only!).
  - a. The Bible knows **absolutely nothing** of *first* making a man a deacon and *then* finding a job for him to do.
  - b. It should, therefore, be assumed that any congregation with deacons has first considered the work that they will do. (While this is the way it should be, this pattern is very rare!).

### I. The Lord's Church Is The Product Of Great Planning.

- A. The words "eternal purpose" are used in Ephesians 3:11.
- B. 1 Peter 1:10-12 discusses God's planning of the church.
- C. Ephesians 4:1-8 outlines some of God's planning efforts.
- D. The Lord did not go to such planning efforts for us to make it up as we go along.

### II. The Duties Of The Deacons Are Determined By The Eldership.

- A. "We have deacons, but they don't do anything." This is a common complaint among some congregations.
  1. This complaint describes a problem.
  2. An important question that must be asked is, "What duties have they been given?" It may be that they have *never* been given any clear set of duties. (This is not their fault.)
- B. The Bible is very clear in outlining the duties of elders.
  1. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).
  2. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).
- C. However, the duties of deacons are as not clearly defined.
  1. The Bible makes it clear that deacons are to be servants. (That's what the word means!) The qualifications of deacons lead one to believe that they should be able to be trusted with responsibility.
  2. Since the elders (bishops, pastors, shepherds) oversee the church, they oversee (and set) the specific duties of the deacons.

### III. A Practical Approach To The Duties Of A Deacon

- A. It is commonly noted that many preachers largely focus on the work of elders; elders focus on the work of deacons, and the deacons are left with nothing to do. This formula needs to change.
- B. A little role playing...

1. First, we have to figure out what the local church *is doing* and what the church *needs to be doing*. (This is the most basic step. Many churches have tried to skip this step, but that never works.)
2. Assume that it is determined that 1) building and ground, 2) missions, and 3) inner-congregational activities are three areas that need special attention.
  - a. **THIS** tells us that we need three deacons. (First the need then the deacon!)
  - b. If we had 5 areas requiring special attention, we would need 5 deacons-if 8 areas then 8 deacons, etc., etc. (Reexamine the Preliminary Matters.)
3. In our assumed scenario, one deacon is assigned to building and grounds; another is assigned to missions, and another is assigned to inner-congregational activities. (Here is where most congregations usually end, but this is really where the work really needs to begin!!)
4. These deacons will need to take a *level* of ownership of their area--**not** over the elders, though. The elders will have to take ownership before God.
  - a. The deacon of missions will probably be expected to read mission reports **more carefully** than the elders and preachers. (The elders and preachers will still need to read these reports, but the deacon of missions will be expected to have greater insight. This may require him to send regular e-mails to the missionaries that are supported.)
  - b. The deacon of building and grounds might be expected to schedule routine maintenance on appliances. He may also be charged to look for trouble spots.
  - c. A key point is this: the elders are to serve as superintendents! It is impossible for them to focus their single attention on these many matters. (That's the principle of Acts 6:1-5.) Some matters (church discipline, Bible classes, etc.) are more necessary of the elders' attention than others (carpet color, paper towel type, etc.).
5. Set goals for these deacons in their respective fields. (The deacon over mission may be told to give monthly briefings to the congregation about supported missions. The deacon over inner-congregational affairs may be expected to plan potluck dinners on a regular basis, etc., etc.)
6. Do these deacons need resources? Yes, certainly they do. There needs to be a way to give these deacons the resources they need. (There are a number of ways to do that. I will outline the way I think is best.)
  - a. It makes sense to set a budget for these areas. (Each of these three areas will need money.)
  - b. It makes sense to allow these deacons to spend *some* of their money freely. For example, the deacon over building and grounds will be allowed to spend \$40 a month without having to get approval from the elders. (If he cannot be trusted to spend this money wisely, he **should not** be a deacon.) If he plans on spending \$41, he will need approval from the overseers. He will also be given an annual budget within he must work.
7. There will need to be accountability!
  - a. Deacons should be expected give full (perhaps even written) reports.
  - b. There should be consequences for deacons who are not taking their work seriously. (Jobs that are too big for one deacon to do should be divided between/among two or more deacons.) Deacons may be expected to recruit help, but they should not be left alone in this task.

## Scriptures (with Strong's numbers)

- 1Ti 3:8** Likewise<sup>5615</sup> *must* the deacons<sup>1249</sup> *be* grave,<sup>4586</sup> not<sup>3361</sup> doubletongued,<sup>1351</sup> not<sup>3361</sup> given<sup>4337</sup> to much<sup>4183</sup> wine,<sup>3631</sup> not<sup>3361</sup> greedy of filthy lucre;<sup>146</sup>
- 1Ti 3:9** Holding<sup>2192</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> mystery<sup>3466</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> faith<sup>4102</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> a pure<sup>2513</sup> conscience.<sup>4983</sup>
- 1Ti 3:10** And<sup>2532</sup> let these<sup>3778</sup> also<sup>1161</sup> first<sup>4412</sup> be proved;<sup>1381</sup> then<sup>1534</sup> let them use the office of a deacon,<sup>1247</sup> being<sup>5607</sup> *found* blameless.<sup>410</sup>
- 1Ti 3:11** Even so<sup>5615</sup> *must their wives*<sup>1135</sup> *be* grave,<sup>4586</sup> not<sup>3361</sup> slanderers,<sup>1228</sup> sober,<sup>3524</sup> faithful<sup>4103</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> all things.<sup>3956</sup>
- 1Ti 3:12** Let the deacons<sup>1249</sup> be<sup>2077</sup> the husbands<sup>435</sup> of one<sup>3391</sup> wife,<sup>1135</sup> ruling<sup>4291</sup> their children<sup>5043</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> their own<sup>2398</sup> houses<sup>3624</sup> well.<sup>2573</sup>
- 1Ti 3:13** For<sup>1063</sup> they that have used the office of a deacon<sup>1247</sup> well<sup>2573</sup> purchase<sup>4046</sup> to themselves<sup>1438</sup> a good<sup>2570</sup> degree,<sup>898</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> great<sup>4183</sup> boldness<sup>3954</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the faith<sup>4102</sup> which<sup>3588</sup> is in<sup>1722</sup> Christ<sup>5547</sup> Jesus.<sup>2424</sup>
- 1Ti 3:14** These things<sup>5023</sup> write<sup>1125</sup> I unto thee,<sup>4671</sup> hoping<sup>1679</sup> to come<sup>2064</sup> unto<sup>4314</sup> thee<sup>4571</sup> shortly:<sup>5032</sup>
- Act 6:1** And<sup>1161</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> those<sup>5025</sup> days,<sup>2250</sup> when the number of the<sup>3588</sup> disciples<sup>3101</sup> were multiplied,<sup>4129</sup> there arose<sup>1096</sup> a murmuring<sup>1112</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> Grecians<sup>1675</sup> against<sup>4314</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Hebrews,<sup>1445</sup> because<sup>3754</sup> their<sup>846</sup> widows<sup>5503</sup> were neglected<sup>3865</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> daily<sup>2522</sup> ministration.<sup>1248</sup>
- Act 6:2** Then<sup>1161</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> twelve<sup>1427</sup> called<sup>4341</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> multitude<sup>4128</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> disciples<sup>3101</sup> *unto them*, and said,<sup>2036</sup> It is<sup>2076</sup> not<sup>3756</sup> reason<sup>701</sup> that we<sup>2248</sup> should leave<sup>2641</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> word<sup>3056</sup> of God,<sup>2316</sup> and serve<sup>1247</sup> tables.<sup>5132</sup>
- Act 6:3** Wherefore,<sup>3767</sup> brethren,<sup>80</sup> look ye out<sup>1980</sup> among<sup>1537</sup> you<sup>5216</sup> seven<sup>2033</sup> men<sup>435</sup> of honest report,<sup>3140</sup> full<sup>4134</sup> of the Holy<sup>40</sup> Ghost<sup>4151</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> wisdom,<sup>4678</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> we may appoint<sup>2525</sup> over<sup>1909</sup> this<sup>5026</sup> business.<sup>5532</sup>
- Act 6:4** But<sup>1161</sup> we<sup>2249</sup> will give ourselves continually<sup>4342</sup> to prayer,<sup>4335</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> to the<sup>3588</sup> ministry<sup>1248</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> word.<sup>3056</sup>
- Act 6:5** And<sup>2532</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> saying<sup>3056</sup> pleased<sup>700</sup> the<sup>(1799)</sup> whole<sup>3956</sup> multitude:<sup>4128</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> they chose<sup>1586</sup> Stephen,<sup>4736</sup> a man<sup>435</sup> full<sup>4134</sup> of faith<sup>4102</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> of the Holy<sup>40</sup> Ghost,<sup>4151</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Philip,<sup>5376</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Prochorus,<sup>4402</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Nicanor,<sup>3527</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Timon,<sup>5096</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Parmenas,<sup>3937</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Nicolas<sup>3532</sup> a proselyte<sup>4339</sup> of Antioch:<sup>491</sup>
- 1Pe 1:10** Of<sup>4012</sup> which<sup>3739</sup> salvation<sup>4991</sup> the prophets<sup>4396</sup> have inquired<sup>1567</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> searched diligently,<sup>1830</sup> who prophesied<sup>4395</sup> of<sup>4012</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> grace<sup>5485</sup> *that should come* unto<sup>1519</sup> you:<sup>5209</sup>
- 1Pe 1:11** Searching<sup>2045</sup> what,<sup>5101</sup> or<sup>2228</sup> what manner<sup>4169</sup> of time<sup>2540</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Spirit<sup>4151</sup> of Christ<sup>5547</sup> which was in<sup>1722</sup> them<sup>846</sup> did signify,<sup>1213</sup> when it testified beforehand<sup>4303</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> sufferings<sup>3804</sup> of<sup>1519</sup> Christ,<sup>5547</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> glory<sup>1391</sup> that should follow.<sup>3326, 5023</sup>
- 1Pe 1:12** Unto whom<sup>3739</sup> it was revealed,<sup>601</sup> that<sup>3754</sup> not<sup>3756</sup> unto themselves,<sup>1438</sup> but<sup>1161</sup> unto us<sup>2254</sup> they did minister<sup>1247</sup> the things,<sup>846</sup> which<sup>3739</sup> are now<sup>3568</sup> reported<sup>312</sup> unto you<sup>5213</sup> by<sup>1223</sup> them that have preached the gospel<sup>2097</sup> unto you<sup>5209</sup> with<sup>1722</sup> the Holy<sup>40</sup> Ghost<sup>4151</sup> sent down<sup>649</sup> from<sup>575</sup> heaven,<sup>3772</sup> which things<sup>3739</sup> the angels<sup>32</sup> desire<sup>1937</sup> to look<sup>3879</sup> into.<sup>1519</sup>

Eph 4:1 I<sup>1473</sup> therefore,<sup>3767</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> prisoner<sup>1198</sup> of<sup>1722</sup> the Lord,<sup>2962</sup> beseech<sup>3870</sup> you<sup>5209</sup> that ye walk<sup>4043</sup> worthy<sup>516</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> vocation<sup>2821</sup> wherewith<sup>3739</sup> ye are called,<sup>2564</sup>

Eph 4:2 With<sup>3326</sup> all<sup>3956</sup> lowliness<sup>5012</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> meekness,<sup>4236</sup> with<sup>3326</sup> longsuffering,<sup>3115</sup> forbearing<sup>430</sup> one another<sup>240</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> love;<sup>26</sup>

Eph 4:3 Endeavoring<sup>4704</sup> to keep<sup>5083</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> unity<sup>1775</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> Spirit<sup>4151</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> bond<sup>4886</sup> of peace.<sup>1515</sup>

Eph 4:4 *There is* one<sup>1520</sup> body,<sup>4983</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> one<sup>1520</sup> Spirit,<sup>4151</sup> even as<sup>2531</sup> ye are called<sup>2564</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> one<sup>3391</sup> hope<sup>1680</sup> of your<sup>5216</sup> calling;<sup>2821</sup>

Eph 4:5 One<sup>1520</sup> Lord,<sup>2962</sup> one<sup>3391</sup> faith,<sup>4102</sup> one<sup>1520</sup> baptism,<sup>908</sup>

Eph 4:6 One<sup>1520</sup> God<sup>2316</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Father<sup>3962</sup> of all,<sup>3956</sup> who<sup>3588</sup> is above<sup>1909</sup> all,<sup>3956</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> through<sup>1223</sup> all,<sup>3956</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> you<sup>5213</sup> all.<sup>3956</sup>

Eph 4:7 But<sup>1161</sup> unto every<sup>1538</sup> one<sup>1520</sup> of us<sup>2257</sup> is given<sup>1325</sup> grace<sup>5485</sup> according<sup>2596</sup> to the<sup>3588</sup> measure<sup>3358</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> gift<sup>1431</sup> of Christ.<sup>5547</sup>

Eph 4:8 Wherefore<sup>1352</sup> he saith,<sup>3004</sup> When he ascended up<sup>305</sup> on<sup>1519</sup> high,<sup>5311</sup> he led captivity captive,<sup>162, 161</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> gave<sup>1325</sup> gifts<sup>1390</sup> unto men.<sup>444</sup>