

SERVANTS



IN THE KINGDOM

by Randolph Dunn

Men Servants – Including Deacons (Diakonos)

Men Servants (Diakonos) Deacons

“Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim 3:8-13) **Comment:**

- a. “Deacons” (Greek diakónous - gender neutral) - vs. 8
- b. “Women” (Greek *gunaikas*) – (universally, a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow or wife depending on context from Strong’s). vs. 11
- c. “Their” is not in the Greek text. Young’s Literal translation reads *“Women — in like manner grave, not false accusers, vigilant, faithful in all things.”* By adding “their” to the English translation the meaning was changed from women servants, *diakónous*, to wives of men servants. vs. 11
- d. “A deacon must be the husband of but one wife” excludes polygamists and men who put away a wife without a certificate of divorcement consequently they are still married to the put away wife. Here deacon is from the Greek word *diakonos*, (nominative singular masculine per Vines). vs. 12

Comment: Unfortunately, the word deacon represented a position or office in the church of England. If the Greek word had been translated as servant there would be less confusion.

Comment: All Christians are priests to serve God. Thus, all are *diakonos*, servants, man and woman, performing the same type of functions God commanded Adam and Eve to do but spiritual rather than physical. Such as:

Obey – If you love Me, you will keep my command -- do not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Work – As you see an opportunity do good – tend the garden.

Reproduce – plant the gospel seed as it is the power of salvation – be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Since these *diakonos* have similar character traits and qualifications as shepherds, their work must be closely related.

Christ’s church is compared to our physical body, it also has many working parts performing different functions. If these “church” body parts do not function, the “church” body is in a weakened condition. It will wither and die.

The work of men having character traits similar to shepherds is not specified so any understanding is an interpretation or opinion.

The following is quoted from a lesson by Joe McKinney:

“In certain context, the term ‘*diakonos*’ takes on additional specific meaning and significance when it refers to a group of servants with unique spiritual qualifications as in 1 Timothy 3 where it was transliterated as deacon. In a sense, this was a helpful practice, since it calls attention that certain Christians are chosen to do a special service probably assisting the overseeing watchmen in their spiritual function.

“While we do have a certain conviction about the work of Christians having these special qualifications, we should never be so dogmatic to think that this is the last word on the subject. We must keep in mind certain Biblical truths about the Body of Christ so that any interpretation will be consistent with these truths. Since their qualifications of character and experience are already proven, it is reasonable to assume they assist the elders in their spiritual work of taking care of the spiritual needs of the church, especially those needs that are urgent. Deacons are not "junior elders" although their work would be similar to some work the shepherds perform and the experience could be good training for these men to one day may desire or aspire to the function of guardian, watchman, or sentinel.

“The Body of Christ a living, growing and battling kingdom - a living organism - has many dynamic needs that are constantly changing.

“Problems arise, needs appear, emergencies occur: someone gets sick, another loses his job, families have squabbles, parents have problems with children, people die and families must be consoled, important ministries need to be developed. Not all the needs in a church are dynamic but many are and, at times, they are unforeseeable or even emergencies. When these needs appear, they must be met, and met right now! Who is going to meet these needs of the church? Who will serve? Who are the servants of the church?

“Consider that during the first century whenever a Christian failed to assemble all were concerned. Did the Roman authorities arrest him for his faith? Did a sect of the Jews do physical harm to him? If so, it would have been appropriate for the Christian family, or their watchmen to ask a brother living in close proximity to go by and check on his wellbeing and supply any missing need.

“All Christians are servants. All are called to serve. The church can call on anyone to meet a need (to serve). It depends on the situation. For example, in the area of finances, the church ought to choose someone with a good knowledge of accounting, who is trustworthy and has the integrity and honesty necessary to do that job. But is it really necessary for that person to be married with children in order to be the treasurer of the church? Does that person have these spiritual qualifications? Any Christian can serve and should serve in some area, independently of the special qualifications. He just needs to be qualified to do that particular job. But all Christians, man or woman, should and can serve in some area.

“Now when dynamic needs arise; that is, when emergencies occur, normally, there is neither time nor opportunity to research the talents and investigate the character of the brethren in order to discover who can serve that particular need at that moment. The church needs a group of servants, already spiritually qualified; proven and identified who are available to be called upon to assist the shepherds/ elders/ watchmen in unforeseen situations where the need is of an emergency nature and must be handled immediately.” (End quote from Joe McKinney.)

The *diakonosus* qualifications given above include being husband of one wife and managing his children and household well cannot apply to all *diakonosus* as all Christian men and women are *diakonos* servants. Therefore, the function of men with these qualifications must be different from other men or women *diakonosus*.

Some people infer that the seven selected by the Jerusalem church in Acts to take care of the Grecian widows' needs were deacons. But they are not referred to as *diakonos* nor are their qualifications given nor is it known if all the seven met the character traits in 1 Timothy.

Many today consider the work of elders as men over spiritual matters while deacons are men over physical matters. This appears to be an incorrect understanding, for by doing so, the work of all other members of the

Body, man or woman, is grossly restricted. In fact, if elders do the spiritual and deacons perform the physical, there is no work left for nondeacon servants. But this cannot be the case for Peter writing to the exiles of the Dispersion states in 1 Peter 4:10 *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”* The word “each” includes men or women with and without the special qualifications. If “each” does not include women then Paul was in error by stating in Romans 16:1 that Phebe was a *diakonos*, a servant.

The contemporary concept that deacons take care of the physical needs of the congregation, such as upkeep on the building and grounds, is not derived from New Testament practice since there is no record in the New Testament of any assembly of Christians owning or maintaining physical facilities. The church’s needs during the period of persecution were people needs not property or things. This is true today as the church is people not property.

Men mentioned by name

“Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 4:36-37)

“So, Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people.” (Acts 11:25-26)

“Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts 13:1-3)

“Sometime later Paul (Saul) said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.’ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.” (Acts 15:36-40)

“My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.” (Col 4:10)

“Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.” (Philemon 23-24)

“Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.” (2 Tim 4:9-12)

“We came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.” (Acts 16:1-3)

“When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.” (Acts 18:5)

“He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.” (Acts 19:22)

"Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. For this reason, I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church"

(1 Cor 4:16-17)

"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel." (Phil 2:19-22)

"But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever." (2 Cor 7:6-7)

"As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ." (2 Cor 8:23)

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.' This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism." (Acts 6:1-6)

"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)-Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke." (Acts 6:8-10)

"But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there." (Acts 8:3-6)

"In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias." ... "Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength." (Acts 9:10...17-19)

"During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world." (Acts 11:27-28)

"Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, 'The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:8-11)

“They (Paul and Barnabas) had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.” (Acts 15:39-41)

“To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ... I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.” (Philemon 1-3, 5)

“I appeal to you (Philemon) for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.” (Philemon 10-11)

“My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.” (Col 4:10)

“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.” (Col 4:12-14)

Questions

1. Since all Christians are priests, their function is to serve God.

 True
 False

2. Christians who receive gifts to serve
 Preachers
 Missionaries
 Elders/shepherds
 Men
 Women
 All the above

3. Servants having identified character traits appear to assist shepherds in performing their function of encouraging and admonishing.

 True
 False

Answers to Questions

1. True
2. All the above
3. True