

# Deacon

**1** According to Nelson's Bible Dictionary, The term Deacon, as in reference to the office of, occurs in only two passages...

**Phil 1:1-2**

**2**

*1* Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

**1 Tim 3:8**

**3**

*8* Deacons likewise must be men of dignity

While the passage in Timothy obviously refers to the qualifications of the individual it also obviously refers to the collective office of Deacons.

That said, it is only in reference to the term Deacon, the Greek word "diakonos," from which it is taken, is found 30 times. In most cases, "diakonos" is translated as "servant" rather than "deacon." It is the context of the passage that determines whether or not the term has reference to the official office or to any servant. In the Greek world, "diakonos" was used to describe the work of a servant, a person who waited on tables or ministered as a religious official.

Vines defines the word as..

**Diakonos** (NT:1249),

**4**

Primarily denotes a "servant," whether as doing servile work, or as an attendant rendering free service, without particular reference to its character. The word is probably connected with the verb dioko, "to hasten after, pursue" (perhaps originally said of a runner). "It occurs in the NT of domestic servants, John 2:5,9; the civil ruler, Rom 13:4; Christ, Rom 15:8; Gal 2:17; the followers of Christ in relation to their Lord, John 12:26; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7; the followers of Christ in relation to one another, Matt 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43; the servants of Christ in the work of preaching and teaching, 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23,25; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Tim 4:6; those who serve in the churches, Rom 16:1 (used of a woman here only in NT); Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8,12; false apostles, servants of Satan, 2 Cor 11:15. Once diakonos is used where, apparently, angels are intended, Matt 22:13; in v. 3, where men are intended, doulos is used."

The office of Deacon then, is seen to be that of a servant or minister, an ordained, or appointed, lay officer in the New Testament Church. The general concept of deacon as a servant of the church is well established in both scriptural and Church history. But the exact nature of the office is hard to define, seen only in the function of the seven in Acts 6, which is where the origin of the office of Deacon is usually understood to be established or at the least first spoken of. The young church in Jerusalem was experiencing growing pains, and it might be understood from their statement that the Apostles felt that for them, their ministry of prayer and preaching was to take precedence over the daily ministrations of the Church. We know the story how that the widows of Greek or Gentile background complained to the Apostles that they were not getting their just share.

To meet this critical need, seven men were chosen by the congregation and presented to the Apostles. Although these men were not called Deacons at that time, the Greek word used to describe their work comes from the same Greek root.

While these "servants" were appointed to relieve an emergency and their assignment may even sound somewhat menial, these men possessed the very highest moral and spiritual credentials. They are described as "men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom". They were formally installed or commissioned by appointment or ordination by the Apostles. 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. The later evangelistic work of two of these original "deacons," Stephen and Phillip, serves as a role model for the spiritual ministry of deacons today.

The list of qualifications for deacons given in 1 Tim 3 shows a couple of different things;

- 1) That this servant of the Church was to be equipped for a spiritual ministry in service with the bishop or pastor:
- 2) Their given obligation was ultimately in service to the Lord.

I want to make a point here, the Deacons work is understood to be the tasks of the maintaining and helping the congregation by doing the things that need to be done. Making sure the building is clean, the yards are done, and whatever maintenance that is needed is done. But, they are also tasked with attending to the congregation as well. The men that filled the role of Deacon in the early Church functioned as far more than just what might considered to be mere servants. The work of Stephen and Phillip strongly suggests that Deacons were in fact a permanent part of the Church's outreach to the world, very early in its history. The man who fits the qualifications of the Deacon, is one who can be an ambassador for God to the world as well as a "Servant" to the local congregation.

Stephen is described as...

**Acts 6:8**

**5**

**8** And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

He was someone who did great wonders among the people. So convincing were his words and miracles that...

**Acts 6:10**

**6**

**10** But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

While some responded in faith, Stephen's zeal for Christ also stirred up powerful enemies. Undaunted by false witnesses, Stephen glorified the Lord even as he was put to death for his convictions.

**Acts 7:59-60**

**7**

**59** They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" **60** Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

Phillip was also an evangelist who "preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (**Acts 8:9-13**). After preaching to eager crowds in Samaria, Phillip taught the Ethiopian Eunuch in the desert and baptized him (**Acts 8:26-38**).

Jesus discusses the idea of being a servant, diakonos, in Matt. 20 on the occasion when the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him and requested that her sons be given places of honor in His kingdom. Christ responds...

**Matt 20:25-28**

**8**

**25** "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. **26** "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, **27** and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; **28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Do you see the true impact of this statement? Their mother wanted her sons to have positions of importance so Jesus tells her how anyone can have preeminence. All you have to do is humble yourself and become a servant to all, as Christ did, to have a position of importance. The concept of being a servant, as described by Christ, shows that one of the first things, if not the most important thing, involved, is that of attitude.

**Epithumeo** (NT:1937)

**9**

"to desire earnestly", stresses the inward impulse rather than the object desired. It is translated "to desire" in Luke 16:21; 17:22; 22:15; 1 Tim 3:1; Heb 6:11; 1 Peter 1:12; Rev 9:6.

When Jesus says that...

**X**

***"He who wishes to be first"***

He isn't talking about an inordinate desire to be preeminent but is speaking to the longing to be first in the eyes of God and Christ. He tells us that that preeminence can only be found by giving of ourselves to God, Christ, and just as importantly, each other. To be a servant, diakonos, is to give oneself to God and to man.

The man who would be Deacon, like the man who would be Elder, is the man who is willing to stand for God in obedience to His commandments while giving themselves to do the work God has placed before His children.

And like the Elder, God has given requirements, qualifications, that are to be met by those that would serve in the office. In...

8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.

12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. 13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

11 1) **Semnotes** Gravity, Dignity  
Denotes "venerableness, dignity"; it is a necessary characteristic of the life and conduct of Christians, 1 Tim 2:2, RV, "gravity" (KJV, "honesty"), a qualification of a bishop or overseer in a church, in regard to his children, 1 Tim 3:4; a necessary characteristic of the teaching imparted by a servant of God, Titus 2:7

12 2) **Dilogos** Double Tongued  
from NT:1364 and NT:3056; equivocal, i.e. telling a different story: KJV - double-tongued.

13 3) **Paroinon** Not given or addicted to wine  
This word not only signifies one who is inordinately attached to wine, a winebibber or tippler, but also one who is imperious, abusive, insolent, whether through wine or otherwise.

14 4) **Aischrokerdee** Not fond of sordid gain  
This means not desirous of base gain; not using base and unjustifiable methods to raise and increase his revenues.

Holding to the mystery of the faith, salvation from sin, with a clear conscience, this means that this man believes that God sent His Son, Christ, to die for the sins of man and applies himself to faithfully obeying from the heart the commandments of God.

15 5) The husband of one wife  
The term means "A one woman man", scholars all agree that this means he should be a married man, but not a polygamist, a practice common at the time especially among the Gentiles. His marriage being recognized by God as being in accordance with the Word.

16 6) One who rules his own house well  
**Tou Idiou Oikou Kaloos Proistamenon**  
One who properly presides over and governs his own family. One who has the command of his own house, not by sternness, severity, and tyranny, but with all gravity; governing his household by rule. This appears to be a maxim of common

sense; no family can be prosperous that is not under subjection, and no person should govern a family but the head of it, the husband, who is, both by nature and the appointment of God, the head or governor of his own house.

As with the Elder, the Deacon is expected to have his home life managed well, to be a proven leader, and to possess a good character. Part of this seems to speak to his ability in fostering the kind of respect and honor in his family that promotes control of his children and translates to his responsibilities in the Church and part of it seems to speak to how he applies the proscriptions of God in his faithful obedience to the word.

Paul wrote that the reward for faithfulness in the office of Deacon is...

**1 Tim 3:13**

**17**

**13** For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

There is no greater responsibility that a man has in this world than to...

**Eccl 12:13**

**18**

**13** The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.

Keeping the commandments of God is the whole of man, it is what completes man. There is no higher calling than to give one's self to God, and there is no greater joy than to do the will of God.

As we saw in Matt. 20:26, according to Jesus, the true heroes in the kingdom of God are those who assume the role of diakonos - a servant, whether that be in the role of a Deacon, one who serves, or an Elder, one who shepherds, or even the Christian who fulfills their commitment to God through Christ to the best of their ability, the true heroes in the kingdom are those who give themselves to God in faithful obedience.

There is a silly little movie about a future war between bugs and mankind. There is a distinction between civilians and citizens, who are those that do the fighting. A line from that movie has been sticking in my mind. The difference between civilians and citizens is that citizens have the courage to stand up for God and do His will.

Ezekiel says it this way...

**Ezek 22:30**

**19**

**30** "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.