

## What Do Deacons Do?

### THE TERM:

“*dia*” – through, and “*konos*” – dust. So a deacon is one who goes “through the dust” – not a designated decider, but a delegated doer; also translated “servant” or “minister”.

- *Diakonia* (διακονία) – service, ministry; 34 times in 32 verses (Acts 6:1,4)
- *Diakoneo* (διακονέω) – to serve, to minister; 37 times in 32 verses (Acts 6:2; 1Tim 3:10,13)
- *Diakonos* (διάκονος) – servant, minister, deacon; 29 times in 27 verses (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8,12)
- *Diako* (διάκω) – to run errands (non-biblical)

### THE TASKS:

#### D – \_\_\_\_\_ Time

- EXPLANATION: Oversight of caring for the widows in Acts 6 would be a tremendous undertaking, requiring time dedicated to the task. It was not done on the basis of *if* the deacons had time to do it. The deacons had to prioritize so that these duties could be fulfilled. The nature of deacon responsibilities is that these are essential ministries that *must* be done, but that, if possible, are not done by the pastors.
- PONDER: What amount of time would be required to accomplish the job in Acts 6? (Consider daily, weekly, and monthly tasks; consider planning, purchasing, preparation, serving, follow-up and evaluation). What about seasonal considerations?
- PRINCIPLE: Deacons set aside time daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly to faithfully accomplish tasks.
- PRACTICE: What are the deacon responsibilities? When will I do my deaconing? List what tasks and time are required for each responsibility. List when these are being accomplished. What priorities must be changed to accomplish tasks that are unscheduled and incomplete? Remember - some duties can only be done during "people-friendly" hours, such as phone-calling and visiting. What are the times each week that is needed to dedicate to my deacon responsibilities?

#### E – \_\_\_\_\_ Deviations

- EXPLANATION: The seven in Acts 6 were selected for the primary purpose of caring for needs so the apostles did not have to. These needs, if done by the apostles, would keep them from focusing on their key duties of "prayer and the ministry of the Word". The deaconship is not intended to make a pastor lazy, but to keep him focused. A working deacon assumes a busy pastor.
- PONDER: Using your imagination, place yourself in Acts 6, and picture what the ministry of the apostles would be like if the deacons were not appointed? What would be the impact of the Jerusalem church without the deacons?
- PRINCIPLE: A deacon's purpose is to enable a pastor to do what must be done by the pastor by caring for things that can be done by other responsible, faithful, spiritual men.
- PRACTICE: Evaluate your deacon ministry. Briefly answer the following questions: In what ways does it eliminate distraction from the pastors? What steps can you take in your deacon ministry to further eliminate distraction for the pastors? What duties does the pastor perform that might distract him from what is most important for him to do?

#### A – \_\_\_\_\_ Needs

- EXPLANATION: Acts 6 again shows that the seven were selected to fulfill a major responsibility (more project-oriented, not position-oriented): to care for the daily feeding of widows. This was not something that could be delayed, shuffled, or done when convenient. Other activities could not substitute for this duty (I did this ministry, so I won't do that one) - it itself had to be done. The deacons would have had to aggressively plan, prioritize, schedule, evaluate & allocate resources, recruit help, and develop a system to insure that all was done as planned. It appears that they succeeded - no complaint was recorded after this.
- PONDER: What tasks and processes would have been required for the deacons to accomplish their mission to serve the widows?
- PRINCIPLE: A deacon must aggressively, logically, and consistently carry out his responsibilities to meet the present needs.

- PRACTICE: Have you aggressively carried out your assigned area of responsibility? What is required to do it well? Have you developed a plan? What areas of responsibility need attention? What areas do you have well? How do you follow-up with yourself and others to insure timely and thorough completion of your assigned responsibility? What are ways to improve?

### C – \_\_\_\_\_ for People

- EXPLANATION: The bottom line focus for the seven was people – people and their needs.
- PONDER: List all the people that the deacons of Acts 6 would deal with, assist, minister to, or indirectly impact.
- PRINCIPLE: A deacon's ministry must be people-focused. All service should be evaluated based upon its impact on people.
- PRACTICE: How am I making people and their needs my focus as I deacon? (Suggestion: this can be done two ways - ministering "to" people and ministering "with" people - take someone along!)

### O – \_\_\_\_\_ as a Team Member

- EXPLANATION: Deacons, when spoken of in the formal sense, are always referred to in the plural. They were selected as plural (seven were selected in Acts 6), and listed as plural (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8). This seems to indicate a team mentality with one another. Much of what they do requires team effort.
- PONDER: What are the benefits of having a team? What current responsibilities require a team effort? What elements build a strong team?
- PRINCIPLE: A deacon ministry is designed to be team-based.
- PRACTICE: What responsibilities do I have to our deacon team? How can I strengthen our deacon team?

### N – \_\_\_\_\_ Eternal Rewards

- EXPLANATION: 1 Timothy 3:13 says, “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. “ God rewards for faithful (“those who have served well”) service. Period. It is no less significant to be one who assists a prophet than being a prophet

himself – “He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:41-42). God rewards faithful service. All who participate in the work receive the reward, much like a football team – one scores, but the team receives the points, because all (coaches, locker room people, scouts, and each player, though most never touch the ball). What was the result of these first seven deacons’ ministry efforts?: 7Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7).

- PONDER: How did the deacons have long-term impact in Jerusalem (from their deacon duties)?
- PRINCIPLE: What a deacon does has eternal impact, and eternal rewards.
- PRACTICE: Be encouraged! Be confident! God sees what you do in secret, and will reward you openly! All that you do to promote the work of the Lord will be rewarded!

They are not without ability. This is an essential role that made the early church function efficiently. Can they teach? Yes, but that is not in the realm of being a deacon. Can they evangelize? Yes, but not because they are deacons. Stephen in Acts 7 was a brilliant orator. Phillip was an effective evangelist. These duties no doubt were developed in part while they served as deacons.