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**DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DEACON MINISTRY AT
GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH,
ARLINGTON, TEXAS**

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
James Hubert Hallford, Jr.
December 2009

APPROVAL SHEET

**DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DEACON MINISTRY
AT GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH,
ARLINGTON, TEXAS**

James Hubert Halford, Jr.

Read and Approved by:

Timothy K. Beaugher
Timothy K. Beaugher (Faculty Supervisor)

George Martin
George Martin

Date September 22, 2009

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PREFACE

The completion of the deacon project included the effort and support of a number of people. First and foremost I want to express my love and appreciation to my family. My wife, Angela, not only provided personal support, she also served as my primary editor. Angela's spiritual life and academic skills were invaluable. Our two children, Drew and Jessica, were at home during the entire time I completed the doctoral program. Their support and encouragement made a big difference. May our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, grant to them joy unspeakable in the days ahead.

Second, I want to thank Pastor Philip Beyer. As an experienced writer, Philip volunteered to review and suggest edits for each of my chapters. As a partner in ministry, Philip helped implement elements of the church's vision, including the ministries of elders and deacons. May the Lord prosper Philip as he continues to grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, I want to thank my current and previous churches. The people of NorthRidge Church, Haines City, Florida (where the project began) provided an abundance of individual encouragement. Special recognition is given to Pastor Don Maiden whom I worked under for seventeen years. Much of what is in this project is a direct reflection on his investment in my life. The people of Grace Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas (where the project was completed) provided both financial support and personal participation (the sixteen-week project required over six months of the church's

attention). Neither of these two churches placed undo stress on me while in the process of completing the project. Each church's investment in my life will serve as an inspiration for me to give God my best at all times. Finally, the people of First Baptist Church of Carrollton, Texas (my home church), was where I came to know and follow the Lord Jesus Christ and learned the value of being a Great Commission Church. Pastor Wayne Allen's personal influence in my life during those years was life changing. May all three churches give their all for the glory of God and for the good of people.

Fourth, I want to thank my mother, Jeanne Foos, and my step dad, Ron Foos. Not only did they encourage me to complete the deacon project, they supported me financially with tuition assistance. Most of all, they prayed regularly for my family and me. May the Lord shower them with the grace of His continued presence.

Fifth, I want to thank the leadership of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Billy Graham School in particular for the Doctor of Ministry program. Due to circumstances, completing this project exceeded the normal time allotment. Without the patience and encouragement of these leaders, this project would not have been completed. Thank you for going the second mile with me. The skills and dedication of each of the seminary staff is most impressive, causing me to respect them and thank God for such people. May God bring about much fruit for all their ministry efforts on campus and around the world.

James H. Halford, Jr.

Arlington, Texas

December 2009

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

My purpose with this project was to help Grace Baptist Church develop a biblical deacon ministry.

Goals

The deacon project had four goals. The first goal was to lead the church to understand deacon ministry for the purpose of deacon candidate selection. The second goal was to identify deacon candidates through a personal qualification and development process offered to all men of the church. The third goal was to lead the church to choose a specified number of men from those who qualified from the servant training process. The fourth goal was to train the existing and new deacons to minister as a group, focusing particularly on conflict resolution skills.

Context for the Ministry Project

Church Location—Arlington, Texas

Grace Baptist Church is located in the southwest area of Arlington, Texas. Arlington is located between Dallas and Ft. Worth. While industry resides in Arlington, the city is most noted for its recreational attractions. Arlington is the home of the Texas Rangers, Six Flags over Texas, Hurricane Harbor, and the new stadium of the Dallas

Cowboys. Because of its proximity to the Dallas / Ft. Worth Metroplex, Arlington also has the advantage of having two interstate highways running parallel through the northern and southern portions of the city. For years Arlington has been expanding from a small to a large city, which as of 2000 made up 1.5 percent of the total Texas population.¹ The demographics of Arlington show a diverse and growing community. Prior to 2006 the median housing price was \$125,700.00, which grew 7 percent in 2006 and was projected to grow another 5 percent in 2007.² The 2003 population estimate had Arlington at 355,007 people. According to the 2000 census, the population consists of 67.7 percent white, 18.3 percent Hispanic, 13.7 percent black, 6.0 percent Asian, and 8.9 percent other races.³

Church History—The Past

Grace Baptist Church was organized in 1956.⁴ With the assistance of another local congregation in Arlington, the church purchased property at Milby Road and Pecandale Avenue and changed its name to Milby Road Baptist Church. Over the years

¹*Quick Facts from the US Census Bureau, Arlington, Texas* [on-line]; accessed 11 October 2008; available from <http://www.infoplease.com/us/census/data/texas/arlington/>; Internet.

²Ellen Florian Kratz, "Real Estate: Is the Party Over?", *Fortune*, 2005 [online]; accessed 11 October 2008; available from http://money.cnn.com/pf/features/lists/re_growth_forecast_2007.html; Internet.

³*US Census Bureau State and County Quick Facts*, 2008 [online]; accessed 7 July 2008; available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/4804000.html>; Internet. All census data came from this source.

⁴Betty Mullina, *A History of Grace / Milby Road / Woodland West Baptist Church*, 2006, Grace Baptist Church [on-line]; accessed 24 July 2008; available from <http://www.gracebaptistarlington.com/about/ourstorypast.pdf>; 2006. All the history of the church is taken from this one source.

the church grew under the leadership of several pastors. Two additional buildings were constructed, with the last building housing a larger sanctuary and education space. During the expansion years, the church changed its name to Woodland West Baptist Church to identify with the section of Arlington where the church was located.

In the decade of the 1990s, the demographics around the church location began to change. Under the leadership of Barry Creamer, the church grew and was in need of more worship space. With limited buildings and parking, the church's location began to be a hindrance to its future potential. In 2001, the congregation voted to relocate to Pantego Christian Academy, a private Christian school on the adjoining major street. The move to the Pantego facility was viewed as an intermediate step. Woodland West Baptist Church planned to sell their old facilities and relocate to a new and better permanent site within a few years.³

Over the next few years, the church prospered with the better location and larger worship space, but education suffered due to the limitations of sharing space with the academy. Every Saturday the church would put out rolls of carpet on the converted auditorium-gym floor, then set up over one hundred and fifty chairs for worship. Every Sunday night, the chairs and carpet would have to be put back in a storage building. Years passed, the relocation plans were seemingly delayed, and in 2004 the church's pastor of seventeen years resigned to teach at Criswell Bible College. It would be up to a new pastor to complete the relocation process.

³Philip Beyer, interview by author, Arlington, TX, 6 November 2008. According to Beyer, "The move to the Pantego facility was viewed as a temporary move that would provide space for the congregation to continue growing until it could afford and justify buying or building a new permanent facility in a few years." Woodland West eventually sold their facilities to an Hispanic Congregation in 2004.

Church History—The Transition Years

The interim period at Woodland West, from September 2004 to July 2005 contained a lot of uncertainties and challenges. Prior to his leaving the church in September 2004, Creamer told the congregation that they would have to change. Furthermore, the director of missions counseled the pastor search committee that it would be wise to hire an intentional interim pastor.⁶ The director of missions understood the dynamics of the church, which had just completed a seventeen-year pastorate with Creamer. According to several spiritual leaders at Woodland West, the church centered itself on the leadership style and spiritual gifts of the former pastor. Under these circumstances, the church needed time to redefine itself before calling a new pastor. The advice to hire an intentional interim pastor was not heeded. Realizing the lack of leadership, the pastor search committee felt pressure to find a new pastor as soon as possible, so they began the process of discovering and interviewing candidates.

While interviewing senior pastor candidates, Woodland West Baptist Church also explored the possibility of merging with two different congregations. These other congregations had declining attendance but adequate facilities. In both cases, the churches were deacon-controlled, and Woodland West was accustomed to being a pastor-led congregation. The church wisely saw that in both cases a merger would not work.

One other factor influenced the church's health during the transition period. The church chose Tom Vann of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to serve as interim preacher, not interim pastor. The deacons felt that church needs could be handled by existing staff and deacon leadership. But, in May 2005, the church recognized the need

⁶Tom Law, interview by author, Arlington, TX, 25 October 2005.

for more pastoral leadership and elevated Tom Vann to interim pastor just two months before I was selected as the new pastor.

On July 31, 2005, Woodland West Baptist Church called me to shepherd them as senior pastor. On September 1, 2005, I officially began serving the church. Both the interview process and early on-site observations revealed that the church seemed to have koinonitis and people-blindness.⁷ There was no organized outreach or evangelism, nor an apparent desire to become evangelistic. Because of the tremendous preaching skills of Creamer, Woodland West grew in some healthy ways, but they also grew by attracting wounded people from other churches who were looking for a traditional Baptist church to experience good preaching. Yet, the church had been steadily declining after the immediate surge in growth associated with the relocation to Pantego Christian Academy. Looking at September attendance averages, the church went from 230 in 2001, to 247 in 2002, to 198 in 2003, to 179 in 2004, and to 164 in 2005.

Within six weeks as senior pastor, I was beginning to form a good analysis of three primary factors affecting Woodland West Baptist Church. First, the vision of the church was centered on discipleship without a Great Commission focus or balance. Second, on the personnel side, Woodland West was a church running 164 with three full-time pastors and a part-time secretary. We were not just pastor-led; we were pastor-focused. There was not sufficient participation in ministry by many adults and youth. Third, the make up of the church's support system was on the verge of

⁷C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 57-72, 89-103. Wagner describes koinonitis as a congregational disease where people get too comfortable with each other to reach out to others or have too little balance in member participation in various group sizes. Wagner describes people-blindness as another congregational disease where the church fails to recognize cultural differences in people groups in target range of the church, and thus fails to impact potential prospects.

bankrupting the church. The church was paying rent to Pantego Christian Academy at \$9,500.00 a month for roughly two days a week of ministry usage. On my start date, September 1, 2005, the church committed itself to spending \$6,800.00 a month more than it was collecting from offerings, without realizing their cash-flow status. We would be operationally bankrupt by February 2006, and no one in the church understood the overall situation—especially church staff and deacons.

During the initial six-week analysis three priorities emerged. The first priority was the formation and articulation of a balanced, Great Commission vision. The general approach for communicating this vision was based on the five purposes of the church.⁸ Once the financial situation came to light, the second priority was eliminating nonessential expenditures, searching for a less expensive location, and improving the financial policies of the church. Without drastic changes, the church would use up all available financial reserves and be forced to draw from a \$300,000.00 fund created from the sale of its old facilities. This fund was vital for the future church relocation. In December 2005, during this process, one of the pastors resigned and the church's secretary job was eliminated.

The third priority that emerged from the six-week analysis was the restructuring of spiritual leadership to move the church forward in its vision and functions. Too much dependence by the people on the senior pastor position had contributed to the situation facing Woodland West. The deacons had limited understanding of the church's dire financial straits and were not equipped to minister under these circumstances. It was my desire to rebuild spiritual leadership by equipping the music pastor and restructuring

⁸Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). The adaptation of the five purposes were culminated in a document for Grace Baptist Church that outlines the church's biblical practices reflected in its mission, structure, vision, and strategy (<http://www.gracebaptistarlington.com/pastor/VisionChart.pdf>).

deacon ministry. However, the stress of the church's situation, the necessary changes, and decline in attendance over the previous years motivated the majority of those deacons to leave the church. By October 2006, I had come to believe I was unable to meet the needs of Woodland West Baptist Church and that my fourteen months as senior pastor were in fact performing the work of an intentional interim pastor. I felt it was time for me to go.

In November 2006, several changes in the church's situation started to emerge. First, the Lord made it very clear that He was not finished using me at Woodland West Baptist Church. Next, the sales price on a small church building was lowered to a point within our budget capabilities. Third, my music pastor and friend resigned, believing his mission at Woodland West was complete. Finally, in December of 2006 the last few deacons, desiring a change, left the church. The stage was set to transition Woodland West Baptist church to a new location where our people could fulfill its Great Commission vision with committed spiritual leadership, within our financial means.

In January 2007, Woodland West put a contract on a small church building on three acres of land. In April the church relocated to the new site under our original name in 1956, Grace Baptist Church. I was now the only full-time church worker, so I had the responsibilities of the pastor, secretary, custodian, lawn maintenance, education director, church administrator, and whatever else needed to be done. This heavy role continued until June 2008 when the church signed a mineral rights oil and gas lease that provided the church with \$107,325.00. The church voted to use part of this revenue to hire a weekly custodian and pay a lawn service to keep up the property, freeing me to concentrate more on the gospel ministry.

The church saw that I had performed these weekly labors willingly, thus setting the example of servanthood. They also knew that these manual labor tasks were not my long-term spiritual calling. With these understandings, and sensing it was the right time, I preached two messages on spiritual leadership. The message on June 1 was on elders, clearly identifying elders and overseers as the same person with the spiritual responsibility of pastoring the church (ministry of the word and prayer, protection God's people from evil, leading God's flock to follow Christ). The message on June 8 clearly outlined deacons as model servants whose ministry purpose (meeting physical needs, preserving unity, and assisting elders in shepherding) is tied to the ministry of elders. The two-week series outlined a vision for the spiritual leadership development of men in particular and all God's people in general. All of these events contributed to the recognition that the church needed increased spiritual leadership in order to realize God's preferred future.

Church History—The Present

Concerning the present, the church's reputation in the community is mixed. Those who identify with the church as Woodland West Baptist reflect on the church's past strengths and weaknesses. Those who relate to us as Grace Baptist Church see us as a small, somewhat traditional church in a contemporary culture. Our best reputation, based on interviews with visitors, is that we are a very friendly church whose name (Grace) reflects our behavior towards new people.

The symbols and rituals of Grace Baptist Church are reflective of a blended ministry. The worship is a mixture of hymns and choruses. Participation in singing is well above average. While our morning service is more traditional, the Wednesday night

service is very contemporary. Preaching and teaching is mostly expository, enhanced with contemporary media art (video, projected graphics, drama). Sunday School participation by percentage to worship attendance is high (80 percent in 2008).

According to Tex Sample's description of the categories of congregational makeup, Grace Baptist Church would be considered a "culturally right" church.⁹ The church is made up of a diverse cross-section of blue-collar and white-collar people. While the church is appropriately tolerant to people of all cultural and political persuasions, the leadership is made up of religious and political conservatives. Our people are biblical fundamentalists and fit into the category of evangelicals with conservative beliefs.

My pastoral leadership style is more managerial in nature. Over the years I have been able to take on multiple responsibilities. My spiritual gifts of service, administration, and exhortation, combined with a phlegmatic personality have helped me adjust to a variety of changes and challenges.

Rationale for the Project

Like any church, Grace Baptist, over its fifty-three year history, had both prospered due to strong spiritual leadership and suffered due to poor spiritual leadership. Like many congregations, on a number of occasions, the question had arisen who will most influence the church's direction. For the church to realize its future potential in a new location, Grace Baptist Church needed to determine how pastors, deacons, and the congregation should follow the Lord to carry out Jesus Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). On May 15, 2007, seven weeks after the church had relocated, I

⁹Tex Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 62-63.

challenged our fellowship with the realization we could be a congregationally-controlled church (majority rule), a deacon-controlled church (board of directors), a pastor-controlled church (autocratic rule), a denominationally-controlled church (bureaucracy), or a Spirit-controlled church (biblical). I relayed the idea that the biblical pattern was a Spirit-controlled church with congregational-participation, deacon-servant modeling, pastoral-authority, and denominational support.

In December of 2006, I told Grace Baptist that we needed to view the relocation of the church as a new church start. With depleting resources, declining attendance, and the departure of most of the existing deacons, the church needed a new beginning. The relocation stimulated a fresh open-minded spirit towards new people. The relocation stabilized the church's support system. The relocation empowered new involvement in ministry for many who had not been involved in service in the past. But, the pressing need was for all men to rise up and lead the church to a new level of effective Christian service. New and stronger pastors, deacons, and ministry leaders were key.

Prior to coming to Grace Baptist Church, I had begun the process of helping my former church reconstitute its deacon ministry. After a period of initial study, I had come to the conclusion that deacons cannot be defined apart from the ministry of elders. I wrote a preliminary report that summarized the ministry of elders and deacons.¹⁰ The report was intended to serve as a blueprint for the reconstitution of a biblical group of elders and deacons, and the report was affirmed by the church's spiritual leaders.

¹⁰James H. Hallford, Jr., *The Ministry of Elders and Deacons: A Preliminary Report from the Deacon Reconstitution Study Group* (Haines City, FL: NorthRidge Church), 2005.

A short time later the senior pastor told me he felt the church was not ready to proceed, and the deacon reconstitution process was halted. While this was disappointing, the preliminary studies demonstrated the close relationship in the New Testament between pastors and deacons and became the foundational study for addressing the spiritual leadership needs of Grace Baptist Church. I was convinced that both elders and deacons were vital to the modeling process of developing spiritual servants throughout the church.

The mission of Grace Baptist Church is to love people to a full, mature life in Jesus Christ. To fulfill this mission the church's structure is linked to a vision based on five purposes which is linked to a people-focussed strategy. In short, our strategy is to engage the lost and spiritually seeking people (evangelism), edify the saved (fellowship), exalt Jesus Christ (worship), educate learners (discipleship), and equip servant-leaders (ministry).¹¹ While the strategy is simple to grasp, it is not easy to produce. The key to fulfilling this strategy is that our people embrace the biblical purposes. Models are a must in the process, which means Grace Baptist must have sufficient elders and deacons committed to modeling the strategy over a sustained period of time.

Prior to September 2008 I was the only recognized elder and was serving with three deacons, who were all facing difficult family and health issues. These deacons were providing good models of commitment, character, and conviction. The challenge was to find new elders and deacons who demonstrated a calling to serve and competency to develop in their calling to serve with me and the existing deacons.

¹¹*People-focused Strategy*, Grace Baptist Church, Arlington, TX, 2007 [online]; accessed 24 July 2008; available from <http://www.gracebaptistarlington.com/pastor/atoz.pdf>; Internet. The strategy is based on the five purposes of the church aligning with twenty-six purpose-centered activities. The twenty-six activities reflect twenty-six desires we feel represent the Great Commission worked out through our people. The elements measure outward activity but cannot measure internal spiritual maturity.

In June 2008 I started the process of enlisting another elder for Grace Baptist Church. Philip Beyer was already an ordained Southern Baptist pastor with experience in two churches in a bi-vocational manner. He was saved, disciplined, ordained, and sent out by our church for a season. In September 2008 I recommended Beyer to the congregation as a non-paid elder of Grace Baptist Church. The congregation supported and formally approved the recommendation. With two elders and the three existing deacons, the church would be in a position to further expand the ministry of elders and deacons and develop spiritual servants throughout the church body.

The overall need of the church was for all of her men to rise in servanthood. For the men to rise in servanthood, they needed models of spiritual servanthood (deacons). The stronger the deaconship, the healthier would be the whole church. Grace Baptist Church needed elders who carried out the biblical role of pastoring the church. For elders to carry out their role, Grace Baptist Church needed biblical deacons who modeled Christian service. The church needed a biblical deacon ministry that would meet physical needs, preserve unity in the church, and assist elders in shepherding the church.

Definitions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Definitions

The term, *elder*, is a noun synonymous with *overseer* and *pastor*.¹² *Elder* is the Jewish New Testament term describing a leader of a local church. *Overseer*, used as a noun, is another New Testament term describing a leader of a local church.¹³ *Pastor*, in

¹²Mark Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 2*, Immanuel Baptist Church, Odessa, TX, 2004 [on-line]; accessed 24 July 2008; available from <http://65.254.70.33/Sermons/Sermon07042004.htm>; 2; Internet.

¹³Ibid. Riley notes the term was used in the Roman world and thereby was

relationship to *elders* or *overseers*, is a verb describing the shepherding of God's New Testament churches.

Shepherding is synonymous with the verb usage of *pastor*. *Shepherding* will be identified as the primary responsibility of elders. When identified with deacons, *shepherding* refers to supporting elders in ministering the word and prayer, protecting God's people from evil, and leading the church to follow Christ.

Deacon candidates refer to the men of Grace Baptist Church who qualify to become deacons. Candidates will be screened from men who complete the first seven-week training portion of the sixteen-week project.

Dellimitations

Chapter 2 does not focus on the issue of women deacons. Historical and theological evidence does not support women serving in a deacon group alongside men. There is evidence of a separate women's group who met specific needs in the early years of church history.¹⁴ The women in 1 Timothy 3:11 could refer to this women's group or to wives of deacons, but will receive minimal attention in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 focuses on deacons as ministers of conflict resolution. Chapter 3 could have focused on how deacons meet physical needs as individuals or as a group. Chapter 3 could also have focused on how deacons assist pastors in shepherding the church. But, the purpose in selecting conflict resolution had to do with a deacon's third more of a Gentile term describing the same function as elder, the term used most predominately by the Jews.

¹⁴Brian M. Schwertley, *A Historical and Biblical Examination of Women Deacons*, 1998 [on-line]; accessed 24 July 2008; available from <http://www.all-of-grace.org/pub/schwertley/deacon.html>; Internet.

primary purpose—preserve unity in the church. Preserving spiritual unity, as described in Acts 2, is essential in obeying Christ's Great Commission and a vital value of our church.

Limitations

The deacon project was designed to begin in February 2009 and was limited to 16 weeks. Therefore, the long-term results from the project could not be measured.

Research Methodology

Grace Baptist Church had an average attendance of 88 with 2 elders and 3 deacons. The goal of having a fruit-bearing church, based on every-member-ministry, demanded developing spiritual leadership (elders and deacons). As spiritual leadership increased in numbers and strengthened in maturity, the next level of leadership affected would be ministry leaders. Ministry leaders impact members—some involved in regular ministry, others involved in entry-level (basic) or occasional ministry. The end result sought was an entire church bearing fruit from its relational connections.

The strategy to meet the goal of having a fruit-bearing church required teaching and training of the entire church membership. Two congregational surveys were taken on Sunday mornings in the first three weeks and were coupled with three messages to impart biblical understanding about who deacons are and what deacons are to do. At the same time, a seven-week men's training seminar (Sunday evenings) was utilized both to develop male servants at all levels of spiritual maturity and to identify those already qualified to become deacons (model servants). Once model servants were selected by the congregation, the new deacon group, along with interested men from the 7-week training, participated in a 9-week deacon and apprentice training group (Sunday evenings).

Essential to both the congregational and men's training was an approach that defined deacon ministry primarily from simple observations of the scriptures. Developing a biblical deacon ministry is challenging since there is very little information in the Bible on deacons. Therefore, defining who deacons are to be and what they are to do was centered to the clearest biblical text (1 Tim 3:8-13). Defining a biblical deacon's basic ministry activities was based on the prototype deacon group in Acts 6:1-7. Identifying what level of spiritual maturity deacons should possess was taken from 1 John 2:12-14.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ABOUT DEACON MINISTRY

Introduction

Choosing the right or wrong deacons will either strengthen or damage the unity of the church and its mission from God. Unfortunately, in the twenty-first century, it is not uncommon for churches to be confused about both the role and proper selection of New Testament deacons. The confusion seems to be rooted in answering the two most important questions about deacons: "What are deacons to do?" and "What kind of person should be a deacon?" The difficulty in answering these two questions is often the result of local church experiences and traditions.¹ Many churches rely on existing church policies and procedures on deacon ministry rather than revisiting the original purpose and teachings from the New Testament on who deacons are to be and what deacons are to do. Beyond confusion, great damage is possible when churches choose the wrong men and give them the wrong responsibilities. But, deacons can be a great blessing to the church when churches choose the right men to serve the right way.

Chapter 2 has two goals. The first goal is to examine how deacons meet recognized needs. The biblical example is the seven men in Acts 6:1-6. The second goal is to examine the qualifications of deacons by focusing on the prototype group in Acts

¹Kenneth Hemphill, *The Ministry of Deacons*, Baptist Press [on-line]; accessed 24 October 2008; available from <http://www.bpnews.net/BPFirstPerson.asp?ID=27180>; Internet.

6:1-6, examining spiritual maturity characteristics identified in 1 John 2:12-14, and expounding Paul's teachings on deacon qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

The starting point is to explore the term deacon in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the English word deacon comes from the Greek word *diakonos*. Early New Testament churches used *diakonos* positively to describe an honorable church group. *Unger's Bible Dictionary* points out other positive uses of *diakonos* in the New Testament such as the servant of a king (Matt 22:13), ministers of God (Rom 13:4), and Christ's service of redemption (Rom 15:8).² But, outside the church *diakonos* was not favorably viewed by the Greek culture except when it applied to honorable service of the state.³

The literal translation of *diakonos* is servant; deacons are servants. The majority use of *diakonos* in the Bible refers to ministers and servants (and its other forms refer to ministering and serving), not to a special office of male servants.⁴ Only in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 do we find *diakonos* translated as deacon, referring to a special group of servants. So why does the English Bible translate *diakonos* as deacon in two Bible texts? Riley explains:

²Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), s.v. "Deacon."

³Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), s.v. "Deacon."

⁴John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1995), 124. MacArthur points out that *diakonos* (deacon), related to *diakoneo* (to serve), and *diakonia* (service), appear about 100 times in the NT. Only in 1 Tim 3:8-13 and Phil 1:1 are these words transliterated "deacon" or "deacons." Various translations of these three words include "administration," "cared for," "minister," "servant," "serve," "service," "preparations," "relief," "support," and "deacon."

When they translated the Bible into English, they decided instead of translating *diakonos* as "servant," they'd just create a new word; and so they anglicized *diakonos* into "deacon."⁵

What are deacons to do? What kind of person should be a deacon? First Timothy 3:8-11 clearly answers what kind of man should be a deacon but only gives us the most basic answer as to what they are to do—serve. On the other hand, Acts 6:1-6 provides a basic definition of deacon ministry, identifies what kind of man should be a deacon, and gives us an example of the type of service deacons render. First John 2:12-14 will clarify what level of spiritual maturity a model deacon should possess. The answers to the questions, what are deacons to do and what kind of person should be a deacon, will help God's church better assess and select model servants that can meet physical needs, preserve unity in the church, and assist elders in shepherding God's church.

Biblical Deacons Have a Clear Ministry Purpose—Acts 6:1-6

Acts 6:1-6 describes a special group of servants who were chosen to meet a specific physical need that preserved unity in the early church and assisted the apostles in their shepherding ministry: they had a clear purpose. Acts 6:1-6 is regarded by many as the first and only record of a deacon group in action.⁶ Luke documents this special group of servants in the context of challenging church growth:

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows

⁵Mark Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 5*. Immanuel Baptist Church, Odessa, TX, 2004 [on-line]; accessed 24 July 2008; available from <http://65.254.70.33/Sermons/Sermon07052004.htm>; 2; Internet. Riley also points out that though *diakonos* is used 30 times in the New Testament, it is translated "deacon" only 5 times in the AV.

⁶Answers.com, Dictionary: Deacon [on-line]; accessed 20 October 2008; available from <http://www.answers.com/topic/deacon>; Internet.

were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.⁷

Though Acts 6:1-6 does not identify the group of seven men as "deacons,"⁸ there are several reasons to conclude they were the prototype deacon group. First, the idea of a servant-oriented, ministry group is implied by the selection of seven special men to meet the need of Hellenistic widows. Second, the usage of the words⁹ *diakonia* (ministration) in verse one and *diakoneo* (to serve) in verse two supports the idea that these men performed a service function as a deacon group. Third, the high level of qualifications placed on the selection of these men in verse three is comparable to 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Though not called a deacon group, the ministry function and personal qualifications of the seven men in Acts 6 is powerful evidence that these seven are the first deacon group in action. Foshee concludes,

It is generally assumed that the "seven" were the prototype of today's deacons. No place in the New Testament are the seven called deacons.¹⁰

⁷All Scripture references throughout this chapter are from the New American Standard Version.

⁸MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 125.

⁹R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934), 240-42.

¹⁰Howard B. Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1968), 4.

Thomas Lea in his work on 1 and 2 Timothy also sees these seven men as prototypes (in terms of personal character and function) of later New Testament deacons.¹¹ With this conclusion in mind, Acts 6:1-6 is the best place to form the clearest definition of what deacons are to do and what kind of person should be a deacon. Deacons are model servants (full of the Spirit and wisdom), who meet physical needs (serve tables), preserve unity in the church (answer the complaint), and assist elders in shepherding (relieve the apostles to concentrate on the word and prayer).

The seven men of Acts 6 are considered to be the prototype deacons in both personal character and function, and provide the scriptural basis for forming a definition of deacon ministry. Meeting important needs is at the heart of deacon ministry. What types of needs call for the service that deacons can render as individuals and as a group?

They Meet Physical Needs—Acts 6:1-3

The first function of deacons is to meet the physical needs of people. Acts 6:1-3 is the only recorded example of deacons meeting physical needs. What precipitated the original need? In Acts 2-5, Luke details a series of events that culminated in the creation of deacons in Acts 6. Acts 2:41 reports that three thousand new believers were saved on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Acts 2:44-45 records that the early disciples “had all things in common” and sold their possessions to share with those in need. Acts 4:32-37 further chronicles a growing church, the needs that were being met, and the apostles taking charge of this early need-meeting ministry:

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were

¹¹Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 115.

common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:1-10 shows Peter's leadership in personally overseeing the collection and distribution of offerings. Acts 5:14 says, "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number."

Acts 2-5 reports multitudes of people being saved and placing themselves under the apostles' teachings. Some estimate that at the time of Acts 6 there were between twenty and twenty-five thousand believers in Jerusalem.¹² The great number of people created both excitement and physical challenges in the early life of the church. Besides the meeting of physical needs, identified with the collections and distributions, Acts 2:42 indicated that a growing need began to take shape: "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." The apostles were being overwhelmed. They had the challenge of trying to keep up with their preaching and teaching responsibilities, combined with the important responsibility of meeting the physical needs of the poor.¹³ The apostles needed deacon assistance.

The physical need identified in Acts 6:1 was a lack of ministry to Greek widows. The widows were being neglected or overlooked¹⁴ in the daily *diakonia* (service,

¹²Lenski, *Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 239.

¹³William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 99.

¹⁴Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), 242. Alexander notes that these widows

aid, relief, attendance).¹⁵ The apostles described the ministry need as "serving tables" in verse 2. The Greek word for tables is *trapezai* which can refer to food distribution or the place for fund collection and distribution.¹⁶ Whether it was food or financial distribution, the seven men were needed to minister to the physical needs of Greek widows.

What kinds of physical needs are deacons to meet? The one recorded example in Acts 6 indicates benevolence to a particular group of Greek widows.¹⁷ History has similar examples of deacons managing distribution of funds to the poor in general.¹⁸ Others report deacons assisting in the Lord's supper and baptism, receiving offerings, teaching, and performing minor duties.¹⁹ Throughout history, the church and its deacons have shown themselves to be adaptable: whatever the need, they have adjusted their ministry to fit the physical needs of people.

They Preserve Unity in the Church—Acts 6:1-3

A second need-meeting function of deacon ministry is to preserve unity in the church. Unity of fellowship was a characteristic that set the Christian movement apart were not necessarily overlooked due to ill will or contempt, but perhaps because they were not as well known as were the native Jewish widows.

¹⁵Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, "Ministration" (*dikonia*) G1248 [on-line]; accessed 1 November 2008; available from e-Sword.net; Internet.

¹⁶Kenneth O. Gangle, *Acts*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 91.

¹⁷Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 75-77.

¹⁸Brian M. Schwertley, *A Historical and Biblical Examination of Women Deacons* (1997), 62 [on-line]; accessed 16 October 2008; available from <http://www.all-of-grace.org/pub/schwertley/deacon.html>; Internet.

¹⁹Unger, "Deacon."

from other religions. Spiritual unity was one of the early church's greatest witnesses to the lost Jews and Gentiles of that day.

The early church's unity was put to the test on several occasions. Persecution attacked the church's unity, but the church prospered under this challenge (Acts 4:1-31; 5:17-42). Sin by some of the church's members threatened unity, but was overcome by the Holy Spirit's discipline (Acts 5:1-11). In Acts 6 the apostles were again presented with a new challenge: dissension eroding the church's unity from within.²⁰ What led to the challenge of disunity, and what opportunity did the challenge afford?

Several factors contributed to dissension among the brethren in Acts 6. First, there was a recognized physical need.²¹ The apostles could not attend to Greek widows without neglecting the ministry of the Word and prayer. Second, the dissension involved a clash in the cultural and social differences between two basic groups of Jews present; Palestinian Jews, who spoke Aramaic and embraced traditional Hebrew ways, and proselyte Jews from other lands, who had adopted Greek culture.²² The spiritual factor was Satan²³ trying to sow seeds of disunity in the early church to discredit her witness and power.

²⁰John MacArthur, *Acts*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1994), 178.

²¹Joseph S. Exell, *Acts*, in *The Biblical Illustrator*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 536.

²²Irving L. Jensen, *Acts: An Inductive Study* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), 113.

²³John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 1:230.

The apostles' solution to meet the Greek widow physical need, preserve unity among the brethren, and free themselves to concentrate on the word and prayer was selecting capable leadership to administrate the particular need. The apostles' role in the solution was to bring attention to the need, identify the solution, indicate the number of men to select, describe the qualities necessary for the seven men,²⁴ and affirm the men with the laying on of hands. The role of the people was to follow the apostles' guidelines, select the seven men who best aligned with the apostles' instructions, and submit these men to the apostles for affirmation.²⁵ It is noteworthy that all seven men selected had Greek names, which suggests they were selected to minister to a Greek group.²⁶

The result of the apostles' and people's action is recorded in Acts 6:7: "Then 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." The service of these seven men was the prototype for all deacons: build and maintain the fellowship of the church.²⁷ In addition, the ministry of these seven men validated the importance of physical ministry to these Greek widows. While the cultural and social differences triggered the first disharmony in the church, the healing of the breach within the church body advanced the gospel proclamation.²⁸ Finally, the work of these seven demonstrated meeting physical

²⁴Ibid., 235.

²⁵Ibid., 238. Calvin points out that the laying on of hands was a solemn sign of consecration under the law; offering the seven men to God. The apostles performed this act, not the people who selected these men.

²⁶Exell, *Acts*, 534-36.

²⁷Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 49.

²⁸Ibid., 5.

needs was important but secondary²⁹ to the apostles' primary purpose—the ministry of the word and prayer.

They Assist Elders in Their Shepherding—Acts 6:4–6

The third function of deacon ministry is to assist elders in shepherding the church. Elders are the pastors of the church. Elders can be defined as men called by God to minister the Word of God and prayer, protect God's people from evil, and lead the church to follow Christ. The role of modern elders is fixed; their ministry actions are defined by the activities performed by recognized elders in the New Testament.³⁰ Thus, elders have both a biblical job description and clear qualifications (1 Tim 3:1–7).

Both deacons and elders are described as servants; they meet needs. In some ways the roles of elders and deacons are interchangeable, as evidenced in Acts 2–5 with elders doing deacon-oriented ministry. Later, both Philip and Stephen, two of the seven, performed elder-oriented roles in preaching and evangelism. But in general, with both groups serving together, elders serve by leading and the deacons serve by assisting (supporting) elders to achieve effective oversight, preaching, teaching, and ministry in the church. A deacon's support role may include performing limited elder functions as needed unless that role interferes with the biblical priority roles assigned to elders.

The apostles served as the initial elders of the church in Jerusalem. When physical needs ministry interfered with the apostle's primary call to minister the word and prayer, deacon prototypes (the seven) were selected as model servants to relieve the

²⁹Exell, *Acts*, 534.

³⁰Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 5*, 3.

existing elders (apostles) of those important tasks. In the case of Acts 6, the seven prototype deacons worked alongside the elders, implementing the elder's oversight of preaching, teaching, and administrating the practical life of the church.³¹ But, the practical issues of Acts 6 are not necessarily common to all churches or all times. Even in Jerusalem, the physical need for the Greek widows seems to have been temporary. Because of the persecution and dispersion of believers (Acts 8:1) under Saul of Tarsus, the group function of the seven appears to have ceased. In Acts 7 Stephen preached and was martyred. In Acts 8 Philip left Jerusalem and evangelized in Samaria. The pattern would suggest that the Greek-widow need was unique and timely.

In other churches deacons would serve as assistants to elders³² by serving the needs of the congregation, allowing the elders to focus on their primary ministry. Marshall agrees to the support role of deacons to elders:

The deacon's relation to the overseer is unclear, but the order of mention in both passages and the comparative brevity of the description may well suggest a subordinate appointment.³³

Deacons meet the physical needs that arise and assist elders in their oversight of the church. Deacons provide the support the elders need to effectively shepherd the flock of God. They bring an adaptability that complements the more fixed role of the elders.

³¹MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 125.

³²Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 28-29.

³³I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 488.

Biblical Deacons Are Model Servants

Deacons are model servants. What do deacons actually model? MacArthur says, "they model spiritual service for everyone else."³⁴ The very words, spiritual service, call for an explanation of who deacons are as followers of Jesus Christ, and what deacons are to do that exemplifies Christ-honoring, spiritual service. Jesus was the model of spiritual service whom deacons imitate. While the Roman culture in the apostle's day had a low view of servants, Jesus Christ, by His power, elevated the spiritual worth of the servant.³⁵ Tenney relates Jesus' example of servanthood:

The unique source of all Christian *diakonia*, and its perfect prototype, is found in Him who, being Lord, made himself servant (*diakonos*, Romans 15:8) and slave (*doulos*, Philippians 2:6). By His incarnation as the messianic servant of the Father and by His messianic sufferings, Christ completely inverted the servant-master relationship and transvaluated the dignity and honor of serving and suffering.³⁶

In order to define how deacons model spiritual service, we need to first explore how deacons model spiritual maturity. Next, we need to explore how deacons model Christian living. Finally, we need to know how deacons model Christian ministry.

Deacons Are Models of Spiritual Maturity

Deacons are models of spiritual maturity. How do deacons model spiritual maturity? The answer lies in defining what the Bible says about spiritual maturity. The New Testament uses a number of descriptions for spiritual maturity. MacArthur points out that believers are called and commanded to work out their salvation (Phil 2:12), grow in grace (2 Pet 3:18a), be imitators of God as beloved children (Eph 5:1), respond to the

³⁴MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 125.

³⁵Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 3-4.

³⁶Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Deacon."

upward call (Phil 3:13-14; Rom 8:29), become like Christ (Phil 2:5; 3:10), and walk like Christ (1 John 2:6). To attain all these elements of spiritual maturity believers are to pursue holiness (1 Pet 1:15) with the help of gifted men (Eph 4:11-13, 15-16, 3:16-20, Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 4:19; 1 Pet 2:2).³⁷ Deacons must take a leading role in demonstrating these qualities of spiritual maturity to both the congregation and the world. A primary motive for a deacon's spiritual maturity is obedience to the Word of God, a motivation deacons model for others.

How do we assess the spiritual maturity of deacons? First John 2:12-14 identifies three levels of spiritual maturity. These levels can be used to establish a standard set of criteria to practically assess the spiritual maturity of all believers. In particular, existing deacons and deacon candidates can be evaluated by this standard. In addition, 1 Timothy 3:8-13 provides specific spiritual qualifications that measure the character and example of existing and candidate deacons. Finally Acts 6:3 provides a standard of Christian living by which the prototype deacon group of seven were selected.

Spiritual fatherhood—1 John 2:12-14. In 1 John 2:12-14, the apostle John writes to a group of believers concerning the need to be separate from the world and hold to true Christian fellowship. Most of John's exhortation to the entire group was delivered to three different subgroups. First John 2:12-14 says,

³⁷John MacArthur, *1-3 John*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 70-71. MacArthur further points out, "Spiritual growth is not measured by the calendar (cf. Heb 5:11-14). People who have been believers for many years are often less mature than others who have been believers for a much shorter time," due to "inadequate study of instruction in the Word (cf. Eph. 4:11-15), or fleshly disobedience and unfaithful application of sound teaching (1 Cor 3:1-3)." For Paul, weakness, sufferings, persecution, and poverty (2 Cor 6:3-10; Phil 4:11-13; cf. 1 Tim 6:6-10) were true signs of his maturity in the Lord.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

The groups mentioned in this text are little children, fathers, young men, and children.

The identity of the groups is vital to understanding and assessing the identification of spiritual maturity. John is not indicating their physical age but stages in their spiritual development:³⁸ stages of spiritual maturity.

The first group mentioned by John is "little children." The Greek word John uses in verse 12 is *teknia*. The significance of the word choice is the observation that John uses a different word for children in verse 13, *paidia*. Some believe that the difference in word usage is in the tone of address. In using *teknia* John would be emphasizing the community, spiritual child-parent relationship and later the subordination-discipline status of the same person.³⁹ Since "little children" is a term of endearment, not an indication of age,⁴⁰ John would be emphasizing affection in verse 12 and instruction in verse 13.

A better explanation as to why John uses two different words for children is in the address itself: *teknia* to the whole group and *paidia* to a specific segment. When John says, "little children" (*teknia*), he is addressing the entire group of believers before exhorting three separate subgroups within the entire group. MacArthur points out that

³⁸John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 100.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁰Charles C. Ryrie, *I. II. III John*, in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 1467.

"*Teknia* means 'born ones,' speaking of offspring in a general sense without regard for age."⁴¹ By using *teknia*, John was speaking to all believers, not just a spiritual age group. John was telling the entire group that their sins have been forgiven. Painter explains John's usage of *teknia* when he states, "This is expressed using the perfect passive: 'They have been forgiven' and are therefore forgiven."⁴² By using the other word *paidia*, John could differentiate the spiritual maturity levels of believers by using the terms fathers, young men, and children, all within the one group, "little children." Thus, "little children" was used inclusively, while "children" targeted a subgroup (stage of spiritual development) with three different points of view⁴³ within the same spiritual family.

The lowest level of spiritual maturity is children—*paidia*. These children would be young believers who, like biological children, are still under (spiritual) parental instruction. They are ignorant of the things of God and therefore immature, needing care and guidance. They only know God the Father in the most basic ways and are unable to partake of spiritual meat (Heb 5:12-13). Thus, they are prone to spiritual weaknesses and subject to dangers associated with spiritual immaturity; they lack the spiritual discernment or maturity to avoid such dangers.⁴⁴ People at the children stage of spiritual development

⁴¹MacArthur, *I-3 John*, 73. MacArthur points out that *teknia* is commonly used in the New Testament to describe believers as the children of God (John 13:33; 1 John 2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; cf. Gal 4:19,28). By using this term, the apostle was addressing all who were true offspring of God, at any level of spiritual maturity. Only two spiritual families exist from God's perspective: children of God and children of Satan.

⁴²John Painter, *I, 2, and 3 John*, *Sacra Pagina*, vol. 18 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 186-87.

⁴³Robert Lightner, *John & Jude: Forgiveness, Love, and Courage* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 30.

⁴⁴MacArthur, *I-3 John*, 74. MacArthur further points out that the spiritually immature may attach themselves to spiritual heroes (1 Cor 1:12; 3:1-6) and be vulnerable

can cause great harm to the body of Christ if they remain in an immature state too long. Stedman comments on the issue of prevailing spiritual immaturity when he states, "The curse of the church has always been immature Christians, Christians who never grow up, Christians who cease their progress soon after beginning the Christian life."⁴⁵

Deacons cannot be spiritual children. If deacons are spiritually immature, they can model only spiritual immaturity. New believers, as spiritual children, can positively model acceptance in God's family⁴⁶ and assurance of salvation.⁴⁷ But, spiritual children cannot model the spiritual maturity characteristics all believers need to duplicate. A person can be a believer for a long period of time, cling to the joys of salvation, but still demonstrate the characteristics of spiritual infancy.⁴⁸ Spiritual children need models of spiritual maturity which is why deacons cannot be spiritually immature. Deacons are needed to help spiritual children grow to maturity by their example.

The middle level of spiritual maturity described by John is young men. The Greek term for young men is masculine (*neaniskos*). What characteristics separate the young men from the spiritual children stage? Young men have clarity of doctrine. Young to heresy (Eph 4:14-15; 1 Cor 16:13).

⁴⁵Ray C. Stedman, *Expository Studies in 1 John* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1980), 84.

⁴⁶Ibid., 85.

⁴⁷Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 186-87. Painter notes that "this is expressed using the perfect passive: "They have been forgiven and are therefore forgiven." What is true of children (*paidia*) is reflected by what John said to young men and fathers (*teknia*).

⁴⁸Stedman, *Expository Studies in 1 John*, 94-95. Stedman identifies from Heb 5 three problems with spiritual infancy: (1) Cannot tell the difference between good and evil; good when it looks bad and bad when it looks good (they keep getting into trouble). (2) Does not know how to apply the word to his behavior (unskilled). (3) Cannot teach or help others, because he needs to be taught himself.

men distance themselves from childish self-absorption and elementary struggles. Young men develop a more mature love for truth and desire to proclaim and defend it (Eph 6:17; 2 Tim 2:15; Heb 4:12).⁴⁹ The ability of young men to properly deal with the word of God is found in verse 13; “you have overcome the evil one.” The young man’s understanding of the Bible goes beyond mere information—his understanding allows him to identify with Jesus who overcame Satan by the power of the Word (John 4:4). Young men overcome temptation and sin because they are equipped to stand against the devices of the evil one.⁵⁰ Henry notes that John addresses young men last, “that those in the middle may hear both lessons, may remember what they have learned and perceive what they must come to.”⁵¹

It makes sense that deacons must, at a minimum, be at the spiritual maturity level of young men and actively pursuing spiritual fatherhood. If deacons are not overcoming the evil one, they cannot model progressive spiritual maturity. If deacons are at the young-men-level, they must have a track record of overcoming the evil one, or they can only model limited spiritual victory. In each of the six affirming statements to children, young men, and fathers, John uses the perfect tense, “implying that an action in the past has achieved the status of situation in the present.”⁵² Thus, both progression and achievement are implied at the young men stage of spiritual development.

⁴⁹MacArthur, *I-3 John*, 75.

⁵⁰Ibid. MacArthur points out that overcoming the evil one is not just for personal sin (Jas 1:14) but equipping to stand against false religion that damns the world (2 Cor 10:3-5; 11:13-15; Eph 6:11-12; cf 1 Tim 4:1-2; 1 John 4:1, 3) and deceptive schemes (Eph 6:11). Thus, they can refute error and guard truth.

⁵¹Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5, *Acts to Revelation* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company), 1068.

⁵²Painter, *I, 2, and 3 John*, 186.

The highest level of spiritual maturity described by John is fathers. Ideally, spiritual fatherhood is where both elders and deacons need to be in order to lead God's church by example. The word John uses to describe the father level is *egnokate*, from *ginosko* which describes knowledge gained by experience. Thus, as physical age is to physical maturity, experience with the Lord Jesus is to spiritual maturity. Wuest points out that John uses the perfect tense in verse 13, showing that "this knowledge was well-rounded matured knowledge, the results of which were a permanent possession of these men grown old in the Christian life."⁵³ In verse 14, John again uses the word *ginosko* but this time in the aorist tense. John also used the aorist tense in verse 14 describing the young men's victory over the evil one. Wuest also says that the usage of both perfect and aorist tenses seems to "indicate the present results of the past action of the perfect tense."⁵⁴

Thus spiritual fathers have the experiential knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes them more like Him than they were as spiritual children or young men. The changed lives of spiritual fathers comes by exposure to the source of truth,⁵⁵ Jesus Christ Himself. Deacons need to model mature life change that arises from intimate and experienced fellowship with the Lord they have known. Experiential knowledge and taking on of another's characteristics is comparable to a husband and wife who come to

⁵³Kenneth S. Wuest, *In These Last Days*, in vol. 2 of *Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 123.

⁵⁴Ibid., 124.

⁵⁵MacArthur, *I-3 John*, 75. MacArthur further points out that spiritual fathers have meditated (cf. Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2; 19:14; 49:3; 77:11-12; 139:17-18; 143:5) on the depths of God's character to such an extent that they gain a deep knowledge of Him and worship Him intimately, 'who has been from the beginning' (Pss 90:2; 102:25-27; Rom 1:20; Rev 1:8; 16:5; 21:6; 22:13; cf. John 8:58).

know each other over time. Over time the husband and wife progressively take on the best of each other's characteristics. The more intimate and close the personal relationship between the spiritual father and the Lord Jesus, the more the spiritual father has become like Him.⁵⁶

Christian character—1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons are also models of personal Christian character. The importance of a deacon's character is evidenced by the fact that Scripture speaks to the character, not the job descriptions for deacons.⁵⁷ Beyond their title of servant, Acts 6 is the only illustration of a deacon group in action. But, "waiting tables" is an application of "meeting physical needs," not a job description. The emphasis in Scripture is that deacons must have strong character: the essential criteria in success as "model servants." Riley explains why the Bible emphasizes character and not a job description of deacons:

Write this down: in Christianity ministry matters. In fact, the highest and greatest thing a Christian can be is a servant. . . . So in Christianity, being a servant is the ultimate, highest, noblest thing you can be. . . . So it's the greatest honor possible to be given a position of service in the church, and Paul is saying, "that's no small thing, to be a servant, to be a deacon; in fact, it's so important that character is critical." So write this down: in Christianity ministry matters, and in ministry, character is critical.⁵⁸

High character validates the integrity of deacon activity, which explains why Scripture emphasizes deacon character and not specific deacon tasks.

Paul outlines the character qualifications of deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13:

⁵⁶Stedman, *Expository Studies in 1 John*, 85.

⁵⁷Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 5*, 4.

⁵⁸Ibid., 5.

Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. 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.

The first thing Paul points out is that the deacon's character qualification is similar to the elder's. Note that in verse 8, the word, "likewise," means "in the same manner." The same degree of qualifications that belong to elders also belong to deacons.⁵⁹ Riley points out that deacons are always identified with elders and classified after elders.⁶⁰ The importance of the deacon's qualifications is emphasized because of the connection with the qualifications of elders. The deacon's qualifications can be outlined in five areas.⁶¹

The first area of qualification placed on a deacon is personal character. First Timothy 3:8 places four requirements on the personal character of a deacon. A deacon's personal character is measured by dignity, consistency in speech, freedom from chemical addictions, and rejection of materialism.

The first measure of personal character is dignity. The Greek word for dignity is *semnos*, which has the sense of gravity, reverence, or dignity.⁶² *Semnos* is rooted in the

⁵⁹Ryrie, I. II. III John, 1374.

⁶⁰Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 5*. 5. Both in 1 Tim 3:8-13 and Phil 1:1 the pattern is elders first, then deacons second. The reason for this pattern is that deacons assist elders. The close association of the two groups require similar character qualifications, since the deacon functions in support or in place of the elder in various situations for certain periods of time.

⁶¹MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 126-29. MacArthur outlines 1 Timothy's qualifications for deacons in five divisions.

⁶²Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, in vol. 2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), 59.

Greek word *sebomai*, "to venerate" or "to worship." People stand in awe of them. Deacons are serious or stately, not silly, flippant people or ones who make light of serious matters. In their deacon selection manual, First Baptist, Lakeland Florida comments on dignity: "Such a man faces life seriously and there is a certain stateliness about him that commands respect."⁶³ However, dignity does not mean that the deacon is cold or joyless.⁶⁴

The second measure of a deacon's personal character is consistency of speech. The deacon must not be double-tongued. The Greek word is *dilogo*s which "primarily means 'saying the same thing twice, or given to repetition' (*dis*, "twice," *logos*, "a word, or speech"); 'saying a thing to one person and giving a different view of it to another, double-tongued.'"⁶⁵ The deacon should have credible, consistent speech. His word should have integrity. If a man says one thing to one person and a different thing to another person, there is a serious question as to how much that man can be trusted with important information. No deacon can adequately preserve unity in the church with double-tongue behavior.

The third measure of a deacon's personal character is in the use of alcohol and drugs. The Greek words, "not addicted to much wine," are *prosecho* (apply oneself to, adhere to) *polus* (much) *oinos* (wine).⁶⁶ Though wine was a common drink, the deacons

⁶³Jay Dennis and Gene Wells, *Deacon Ministry Booklet* (Lakeland, FL: First Baptist at the Mall, effective August 2004), 7.

⁶⁴MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 126-27.

⁶⁵Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* [on-line]; accessed 13 November 2008; available from <http://vines.mike-obrien.net/>; Internet.

⁶⁶Strong's *Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, G4437, G4183, and G3631 [on-line]; accessed 13 November 2008; available from e-Sword.net; Internet.

were not allowed to be addicted by any such substances. Since alcohol is a drug, not just a beverage, a deacon should not lean on substances to handle life.⁶⁷ Though abstinence is not specifically called for in verse 8, it is reasonable to expect abstinence in a modern culture where drinkable water is plentiful. Deacons are role models, and even if they believe they are not addicted to wine or drugs, they are bound as such to the weaker brother according to the principle found in 1 Corinthians 8 and 9. Abstinence sets a clear example to those prone to the pitfalls of alcohol or drugs.

The fourth measure of a deacon's personal character is susceptibility to materialism; he must not be fond of sordid gain. The Greek word is *aischrokerdeis*, combining *aischros* (disgraceful) and *kerdos* (gain). The deacon is not greedy and will not exchange wrongful gain for the glory of God.⁶⁸ Because a deacon is a man of the people and often, like the men of Acts 6, may be in charge of distributing food or money, a deacon must be trustworthy with the material resources of the church; not succumbing to the temptation of materialism with God's resources.⁶⁹

The second area of qualification has to do with the deacon's spiritual life. The deacon is one "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" (1 Tim 3:9). The deacon must have spiritual convictions.⁷⁰ Spiritual convictions can only come from an understanding and commitment to know and live by the word of God. The "mystery of the faith" refers to revealed truth previously hidden but now manifested (cf. Rom 16:25;

⁶⁷Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 5*, 4-5.

⁶⁸Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 59.

⁶⁹Lea, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 116.

⁷⁰Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press), 1990.

1 Cor 15:51; Eph 3:3-6; 6:19; Col 1:26).⁷¹ One implication of a deacon's understanding and commitment to live by biblical truth is that he must be, at a minimum, at the young man stage of spiritual development (1 John 2:12-14). More than just head knowledge, the deacon's holding to (*echo* in Greek) or possession of truth is illuminated by the Holy Spirit.⁷² Thus, the deacon's spiritual understanding of the word of God produces change that makes his life one that others can model. Stephen in Acts 6 and 7 is the shining example of a man who holds to the mystery of the faith, evidenced by how he defended and preached the scriptures to those most hostile to the gospel.

The third area of qualification has to do with the deacon's ministry life (1 Tim 3:10)—“these men must also first be tested.” If deacons are to be models of their very title, servants, they must have a visible record of sacrificial service. In sensitive areas, such as financial and food distribution to the poor, deacons must be trustworthy.⁷³ The verb “tested” is *dokimazo* and it is in the present tense. The verb tense implies that the test is ongoing, not just a one-time event for a model servant.⁷⁴ Testing means the prospective deacon must have a record of integrity and experience in service that has been observed over a period of time. A qualified and proven servant is thus commissioned for greater service as a deacon. Because he is proven, elevation to model servant before the congregation is a natural step in his service to the Lord. An unproven man elevated to model servant may end up being a crowned deacon; one who only holds to a position.

⁷¹MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 128.

⁷²Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 60.

⁷³Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 8.

⁷⁴MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 129.

The fourth area of qualification has to do with the deacon's moral life, demonstrated by public behavior and marriage. In reference to the deacon's moral life verse ten says, "then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach." "Above reproach" immediately follows the testing qualification mentioned in the first part of verse ten. The word, "then," is significant. It means that the prospective deacon must be proved before serving in office.⁷³ Along with a track record of ministry, Paul uses the Greek word *anegkletoi* translated "above reproach," a judicial term meaning "unaccused." The addition of the participle *ontes* is a conditional, meaning the prospective deacon must be "unaccused."⁷⁴

The second aspect of the deacon's moral life is measured in the deacon's marriage. The deacon is to be a one-woman-man; "husband of only one wife" (verse 12). The same Greek construction that describes a deacon's marriage describes an elder's (overseer's) marriage.⁷⁵ For the culture of Paul's time the one-woman-man requirement certainly meant that deacons were not to practice bigamy or polygamy. It would rule out a deacon who divorces his wife in order to marry another more desirable. Physical adultery would also disqualify a man from being a deacon, since he could not model one-woman-man behavior. While no man is perfect as a husband, Paul stresses that deacons are to be devoted to their wives and marriages (quality of one-flesh relationship over mere marital status).⁷⁶

⁷³Ryrie, *I, II, III John*, 1374.

⁷⁴Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 61.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁶Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 5*, 5.

The fifth area of qualification has to do with the deacon's home life. The deacon must be a good manager of his children and his household. The Greek word for manager, *prostemi*, is translated "ruling" in the AV and means "to be over, to superintend, or preside over."⁷⁹ While a deacon's presiding over his home would assume a measure of domestic orderliness and parental control,⁸⁰ the emphasis seems to be more on the deacon as the spiritual leader of his home. The deacon teaches and models the ways of the Lord at home where he is seen most by his children, especially in the way he treats his wife.⁸¹

There is one uncertain statement related to deacon qualifications. The statement does not relate directly to the deacon's personal behavior. The uncertainty stems from verse 11 where it states, "Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things." The question is whether these women are wives of deacons or a separate class of servants.⁸² It is true that women served the church, especially with other women and children (Titus 2:4).⁸³ If "women" refers to the

⁷⁹Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 61-62.

⁸⁰Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 12-13.

⁸¹Riley, *Church Leadership 101 - Part 5*, 5.

⁸²Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 492-93. Marshall comments on the idea that these women were the wives of deacons: (1) placement in the text supports this, (2) textual close placement with the "husband of one wife," (3) Greek word for "woman," *gune*, is too general for an office, but common reference to wife, (4) prohibition of 1 Tim 2 leading and teaching restrictions make an office here unlikely. Marshall's comments on the idea that these women were female deacons: (1) Verses 8 and 11 (*osautos*) suggest a distinct group, (2) no possessive pronouns or definite article, (3) no feminine form of *diakonos* to serve as a technical designation, (4) no mention of wives of overseers (no parallel), (5) Rom 16:1 is a clear example of a female deacon, (6) context has virtues requirements similar to male deacons.

⁸³Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 120.

wives of deacons, as some say,⁴⁴ the behavior of the wives could impact the deacon's selection no matter how well qualified the individual was himself. If "women" are a specialized group of widows who serve under the male deacon group, then the issue centers on the women's personal qualifications and how well they serve under the elders or the male deacon group.

Deacons Are Models of Public Christian Living—Acts 6:3

Deacons are models of public Christian living. A deacon's life style is an extension of his character. What is in a deacon's heart will come out through his words and deeds, both observable. In Acts 6:3 the apostles instructed the people, "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task." What kind of men were needed to meet the Greek-widow need, restore unity among the brethren, and assist the apostles in shepherding? Acts 6:3 gives us two descriptions that set men apart to serve as deacons.

Good reputation. A deacon's first measure of Christian living is a "good reputation" (Acts 6:3). The Greek word for reputation is *martureo*, the root word for witness; a deacon has a good testimony. Other words associated with *martureo* are charge, give evidence, be well reported, and testimony.⁴⁵ Men under consideration as deacons would likely be known by people in the community; their reputation would be well established. The importance of reputation in serving at the deacon level is so

⁴⁴Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Women." "Women" probably refer to wives of deacons, not a church office of deaconess."

⁴⁵Strong's *Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. "Honest Report," G3140.

important that 1 Timothy 3:9 speaks of the deacon being tested first (proven) before being selected. In the case of the Greek widows' need, the people selecting the prototype deacons were able to distinguish those whose reputation with material goods was above reproach. The approval of the people, who were on the receiving end of physical needs-meeting ministry, meant that there was never a man of dubious reputation being placed in this office.⁶⁶ The integrity of such men would be a direct reflection on God, the elders they serve under, and the people they serve.

Full of the Spirit and of wisdom. The second measure of a deacon's Christian life is "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Exell points out that being full of the Holy Spirit is vital "so that their godliness might be apparent. Men full of the Spirit would not be likely to do injustice through partiality or become defaulters."⁶⁷ When examined closely, deacons exhibit the manifestations Paul identified in Ephesians 5:18-21 by those full of the Holy Spirit: a personal devotional life, vital corporate worship, private and public thanksgiving, and the willingness to submit themselves in righteous biblical relationships.⁶⁸ In describing a deacon's spiritual life, First Baptist Church of Orange, Texas in their deacon handbook says,

⁶⁶Exell, *Acts*, 536.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸As to spiritual submission in relationships, Paul in Eph 5:22-6:9 makes application in the following ways: wives subject to husbands, husbands loving their wives, children obeying and honoring their parents, fathers not exasperating their children, and slaves obeying their masters. A deacon, full of the Holy Spirit, can be examined fully or partially by all these descriptions; what kind of husband he is, how his wife responds to him, how his children are led, how he treats his children, how he responds to employers or how he treats employees.

Full of the Holy Spirit means ‘covered in every part’ by God’s Spirit. This is not a temporary condition, but an abiding quality. The deacon full of the Holy Spirit will be submitted to the Spirit’s control, exemplifying the Spirit’s character, and directed by the Spirit’s leadership.⁹⁰

According to Lenski, a deacon’s wisdom “was the ability and the readiness to apply Christian knowledge to the practical affairs of life.”⁹¹ MacArthur describes the requirement for wisdom as the “ability to apply biblical & theological knowledge to particular needs; men of sober, righteous judgment (e.g. 1 Chron 12:32).”⁹² In the case of the Greek widows in Acts 6, the seven men had to determine who was to receive support and how much support to administer. These men had to apply biblical understanding to a contemporary situation. In the case of modern churches a deacon needs wisdom to deal with the natural, evil nature present in believers and especially in nonbelievers. When dealing with the distribution of church resources the deacon expends time and energy to meet important needs—ones that would otherwise have to be met by elders. Exell concludes, “the deacons would take care of bread, the apostles the bread of life.”⁹³

Deacons Are Models of Christian Ministry

Deacons are models of Christian ministry. Ministry is another way to describe service that meets the needs of people in obedience to Christ’s Great Commission. In modeling Christian ministry, deacons function primarily as individuals, but also in groups. A deacon utilizes his unique life to serve effectively, modeling ministry for others.

⁹⁰Deacon Handbook (Orange, TX: First Baptist Church, adopted 21 September 2003), 7.

⁹¹Lenski, *Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 243.

⁹²MacArthur, *I-3 John*, 182.

⁹³Exell, *Acts*, 536.

A deacon models both individual and group ministry by the employment of his "TALENTS." The acrostic "TALENTS"⁹³ can be explained and illustrated by the apostle Paul who used his unique life as a ministry model. Paul's "Temperament" or personality is illustrated by his zeal (Gal 1:13-14). Paul's "Ambitions" indicate the passions that drove him to know and serve the Lord (Gal 2:8; Acts 20:24). Paul's "Leadership Style" shows how he motivated and influenced others through his personality and character (2 Cor 9:16-23). Paul's "Experiences" reveal how sequential events shaped his life for ministry (Acts 22:3; 8:1; 9:1-20; Gal 1:18; 2 Cor 12:2-10). Paul's "Needs" demonstrate how his strengths and weaknesses (spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical) helped him mature spiritually. Paul's "Talents (abilities)," such as tent-making, created open doors of ministry. Paul's "Spiritual Gifts" focused him in his purpose in the body of Christ (2 Tim 1:11). Paul served in both elder and deacon roles in early churches. Apostles such as Paul are our models of Christian ministry.

Individual ministry—Acts 6-8. The Bible in Acts 6-8 records how two of the seven prototype deacons ministered as individuals.

Stephen is first mentioned as one of the seven in Acts 6:5. Stephen's part in healing the breach in fellowship caused by the Greek widow problem helped the church expanded greatly (Acts 6:7). Stephen was gifted by the Holy Spirit with miracles as evidenced in Acts 6:8; "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people." The phrase, "full of faith" means Stephen excelled in faith and other

⁹³Session Two, in *Equipped for Christian Ministry and Mission*, Christian Life and Mission Seminar (Haines City, FL: NorthRidge Church, 2005), 69-71.

virtues.⁹⁴ His ability to effectively dialogue with opposition (Acts 6:9-10) meant Stephen had speaking gifts, most noticeably “wisdom” (Acts 6:10) and perhaps prophecy. Stephen’s preaching ability in Acts 7 demonstrated the function of his “TALENTS” in combination with his character. Stephen’s willingness to minister as an individual cost him his life, but his ministry played a pivotal role in spreading the gospel beyond Jerusalem.⁹⁵ By modeling service, Stephen’s example no doubt inspired the persecuted Christians fleeing Jerusalem to fearlessly preach the gospel themselves (Acts 8:4).

Philip (Acts 8:4-40) is also a good example of how a deacon ministers as an individual. He is mentioned as one of the seven in Acts 6:5. Like Stephen, Philip played a pivotal role in restoring the early church’s fellowship in Acts 6. The second passage about Philip is reported in Acts 8:5 where he and many other Jerusalem believers were dispersed due to the persecution associated with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:4). Philip’s primary spiritual gift is likely evangelism, based on the way he is identified in Acts 21:8:⁹⁶

On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

Acts 8:5-13 reports that Philip spread the gospel in Samaria and that multitudes responded to his preaching. By action and implication Philip did not assume the elder’s role, for in Acts 8:14 the apostles Peter and John came to Samaria to take charge of the gospel ministry Philip began. The last thing the Scripture reports about Philip is that he “had four virgin daughters who prophesied” (Acts 21:9). The ministry of Philip’s daughters

⁹⁴Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles*, 237.

⁹⁵MacArthur, *Acts*, 183.

⁹⁶Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. “Deacon.”

suggests that he was also a great role model in his own home: he served and his daughters served.

Little is known about the individual ministry of the other five of Acts 6.

Tradition says Prochorus was with John and later became the bishop of Nicomedia and martyred in Antioch.⁷ Polhill tells us that all we know of Nicolas is "he was a proselyte (Gentile converted to Judaism) from Antioch."⁸⁸ While we do not know the details of the service of the five (or multitudes of other early believers), we do know that they served.

Group ministry—Acts 6:5-7. Deacons must also be able to function as groups. The prototype deacon group in Acts 6 met the Greek widow need, although this need seems to have been a temporary situation. By implication, the group function of deacons seems to be needs-driven. While the seven were selected as individuals, they were chosen for their ability to meet a need as a group. Thus, if servants cannot work with others, they should not be deacons. Foshee says that deacons should have a "sensitive spirit, not skin."⁸⁹

What type of work do deacon's perform as a group? They meet whatever physical need is required to preserve unity in the church and assist elders in their shepherding responsibilities. The seven men of Acts 6 performed social work which neither the apostles nor the seven regarded as inferior or beneath their dignity. When the prototype deacons made the Greek widows need their priority, it allowed the apostles to

⁷MacArthur, *Acts*, 183-84.

⁸John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 182.

⁸⁹Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon*, 18.

make the ministry of the word and prayer their priority.¹⁰⁰ The apostles' call for the people to select the seven "found approval with the whole congregation" (Acts 6:5), which validates group ministry to meet important physical needs.

Even if Acts 6 is not accepted as the prototype deacon group, 1 Timothy 3:8 lends evidence that deacons function as a group or class of servants, as well as individuals. Wuest makes the observation:

The absence of the article before "deacons" shows that these church officers, charged with the temporal welfare of the local church as the bishops were with its spiritual warfare, are treated as a class. The Greek word is used generally of a servant as seen from the standpoint of his activity in service.¹⁰¹

The group function of deacons is not outlined in 1 Timothy 3, but the fact that deacons are listed after elders identifies their purpose as a group. How? Each group has a separate function contained in their names; elders / overseers lead (direct) and deacons serve. Reversing the function of each group is not biblical and even dangerous.

In fact 1 Timothy 3:13 confers a blessing on the deacon group that functions well: "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." "Good standing" literally means "an elevated stand." As model servants deacons are a step above everyone else; put on a pedestal. When 1 Timothy 3:18 says, "Great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus," Paul speaks of the type of boldness associated with empowered speech.¹⁰² Both Stephen and Philip modeled service well. Their service led to the type of boldness that made them effective preachers of the gospel.

¹⁰⁰Stott, *The Letters of John*, 121.

¹⁰¹Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 59.

¹⁰²MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 129.

Conclusions—Biblical Deacon Ministry

There are five primary conclusions and implications that churches should consider concerning biblical deacon ministry that arise from the study of Acts 6:1-6, 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and 1 John 2:12-14.

The first conclusion is that deacons are servants, not elders. The meaning of *diakonos* makes this conclusion clear. Thus, servant is a deacon's basic identification and job description. In light of this, deacons must be careful not to reverse roles with elders. If deacons try to lead the church, the church's support systems, to which deacons tend to give their attention (buildings, budgets, programs), may end up becoming the church's vision. Maintenance of the status quo may become the mission. A deacon-controlled church is a non-biblical church. In terms of church leadership, elders are to seek the Lord's direction and lead the church to follow that direction. Deacons are to follow the Lord's direction by meeting needs that arise while fulfilling the Great Commission.

The second conclusion is that deacons are models. Deacons can model any level of spiritual maturity: from godly and mature biblical standards found in Acts 6:3, 1 John 2:12-14, and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 all the way down to spiritual immaturity. And the results range from spiritual blessings to spiritual damage. Deacons will either promote solid Christian living (by their reputations, fullness of Spirit and wisdom), or bring reproach to the local church by ungodly behavior. Deacons can either distinguish themselves by modeling active, personal ministry or wasting their TALENTS. Deacons can model powerful group ministry by meeting vital unity-building church needs, or maintain the status quo by functioning like a board of directors.

A third conclusion is that Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 gives the pattern and standard for selecting deacons. Acts 6:1-6 shows us that elders are responsible for identifying the need for additional deacons, deciding on the number required, articulating the biblical standard of deacon qualifications (1 Tim 3:8-13), and confirming deacons selected by the people. The people are responsible for selecting the best needed men to serve as deacons—men who meet the biblical standard. Elders must live up to the biblical standard of Christian leadership (1 Tim 3:1-7) and teach the biblical standard of deacon selection. One particular standard must be upheld—1 Timothy 3 clearly indicates that deacons are men. There are biblical women servants such as Phoebe (Rom 16:1), but they serve differently than the men of 1 Timothy 3. There is also good evidence for a second, specialized group of women servants in the Scripture. But when it comes to women serving with the male group, the line must be drawn: no woman can righteously be a “one-woman-man.”

A fourth conclusion is that deacons must put a priority on individual ministry over group ministry. Deacons should concentrate on using their TALENTS to serve the Lord, assist the elders, and love the people. Deacons do not need a group position to be effective. Deacons function as a group based on needs. When a temporary or ongoing support need is best served by a deacon group, those needs become the call to draw deacons together to function as a group. Thus, deacons' meetings should focus on meeting needs and group development, not trying to lead the church as a board. As individuals, deacons should focus on their regular ministry. The fact that deacons have no biblical group job description implies that a deacon should emphasize individual model service.

A fifth conclusion is that deacons are very important to the church. Churches need both elders and deacons to discover and realize God's direction for His church. Churches need elders to concentrate on the ministry of the word and prayer, protect the church from evil, and lead the church to follow Christ. Effective elder ministry will be accompanied by physical challenges (needs) that threaten the unity of the church. Model servants (deacons) are best suited to come alongside elders to meet challenges in order to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Each church has a unique vision from God to carry out Jesus Christ's Great Commission. To fulfill Christ's Great Commission, churches need model servants (deacons) who meet physical needs, preserve unity in the church, and assist elders in shepherding the body of Christ.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEACON AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Introduction

Deacons, by identification and calling, are to help preserve unity in the church. When church unity is threatened by conflict within the body, biblical deacons are ideal choices to serve as ministers of reconciliation through the process of conflict resolution. In chapter 2 we recognized that Acts 6 is the best place to form a working definition of a biblical deacon: model servants who meet physical needs, preserve unity in the church, and assist elders in shepherding God's people. The prototype deacons of Acts 6 were able to help the apostles restore unity in the fellowship (resolve conflict) by who they were (model servants) and what they did (met physical needs and assisted elders). Therefore, conflict resolution skills are needed to help deacons accomplish their ministry.

Chapter 3 covers the subject of conflict resolution with the understanding that there are two primary sources deacons can utilize to aid them in the process of conflict resolution. The first source is the Bible, God's authoritative word on understanding and resolving conflict. The Bible is divine revelation, therefore it contains what God says and is infinitely superior to what man thinks or feels about conflict. The second source deacons can utilize in conflict resolution is general revelation. General revelation concerns truths in God's creation that can be observed, systematized, and practiced. Sociological and secular materials on conflict resolution, which utilize general revelation, are valuable

when they observe and apply truths consistent with biblical teachings.¹ Chapter 3 will approach conflict resolution with biblical revelation as primary and authoritative, and general revelation, compiled by religious or secular sources, as secondary and useful.

Based on divine and general revelation four basic steps will be offered to equip deacons in resolving conflict. These four steps utilize both biblically-oriented and secular materials. Additionally, the suggested approach takes into account that deacons need conflict resolution skills both in the church and in their daily lives (work, home, other).

Step 1—Acquiring a General Understanding of Conflict

The first step in the process of conflict resolution is to acquire a general understanding of conflict. Conflict is easily misunderstood, which is one reason why it can be so destructive. Contrary to common misconceptions, conflict is not abnormal; there are normal struggles in relationships. Conflict involves more than simple disagreement. Conflict is not pathological (a disease that must be cured). Conflict should not always be avoided at all costs to obtain peace at any price. Conflict is not just a personality problem (surface issue). Conflict is not bad because it is emotional (involving anger). Conflict is not the admission of failure.² Because it is so easily misunderstood, deacons need a general understanding of conflict before taking steps in the process of conflict resolution.

¹William Bell, "Doctrine of Scripture: Bibliology" (personal class notes—*Christian Doctrines*, 1978, Dallas Baptist College). Bell outlined a correlation between divine and general revelation in his summary of biblical inerrancy. He describes the Bible as altogether accurate and reliable (without error), completely trustworthy in science, history, geography, chronology, etc. as well as 'faith and practice.' Truth discovered by general revelation must align with and support biblical revelation.

²Kenneth O. Gangel and Samuel L. Caine, *Communication and Conflict Management in Churches and Christian Organizations* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 129-31. Gangel lists and describes seven misconceptions about conflict.

Conflict Defined and Described

Conflict refers to external or internal struggles or clashes involving opposing forces within individuals or between groups. The term, conflict, taken from the Latin *confilgere*, means "to strike together."³ Striking together pictures the friction and feelings of tension between individuals and groups when opposing needs, objectives, ideas, interests, and goals collide. Conflict can also be defined as a disagreement (differing position or misunderstanding) which causes the parties involved (directly or indirectly) to perceive a threat (beyond actual issues) to their needs, interests or concerns (substantive, procedural, and psychological).⁴

Describing conflict is complex because conflict involves people dealing with issues and personal agendas. In dealing with issues, people can be rational and act objectively. People can act unselfishly and keep their emotions properly involved and under control. Conversely, people can be irrational, allowing personal agendas, false perceptions, self-centered goals, and unchecked emotions to inhibit resolution. People also struggle with the complex tensions between idealism and realism.⁵ Fear,

³Jeffrey Lynn Gaskins, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Internal Church Conflict and Church Growth: With Selected Case Studies of Southern Baptist Churches in the Shelby Association" (Ph.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 7.

⁴Harry Webne-Behrman. *Conflict Resolution: About Conflict*, Academic Leadership Support, Office of Quality Improvement and Office of Human Resource Development, UW-Madison [on-line]; accessed 12 January 2009; available from <http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/online-training/resolution/aboutwhatisit.htm#whatisconflict>; Internet.

⁵John M. Miller, *The Contentious Community: Constructive Conflict in the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1939), 27-33. Miller cites Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as an example of necessary idealism (high standards). He also states, "The church must also have some realism." Realism calls for high commitment to apply biblical standards (Matt 9:37; 10:5-10, 16-18, 23).

self-preservation, and a competitive spirit add to the complex nature of conflict. The intensity of conflict may include opponents aiming to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals.⁶ While issues can be uncovered by interaction, personal agendas may not be as evident. The complexity of conflict means deacons need understanding (that can come from training) and spiritual discernment (that comes by the Holy Spirit) to separate issue from motivation.

Sources of Conflict

Knowing the source of conflict is important. James 4:1-3 identifies the importance of understanding the origin of conflict when James asks,

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.⁷

Sources of conflict can be classified in many ways—one way is by individuals (personal motivations), groups (organizational challenges), and spiritual forces (supernatural influences). Each one of these sources contribute to both the complexity and challenge of conflict resolution. Deacons need a general understanding of the origin of conflict.

Source 1—personal motivations. The first source of conflicts is from personal motivations. The New Testament provides many examples of personal motivations causing conflict. Jesus' twelve disciples fought individually over position and greatness

⁶Gangel, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 131.

⁷All Scripture references throughout this chapter are from the New American Standard Version.

(Luke 22:24-27). Martha was in conflict with Mary over differing expectations of good, better, and best (Luke 10:38-42). Judas was in conflict with Mary at the anointing of Jesus because of hidden greed (John 12:1-8). In one of Jesus' parables, workers were in conflict with a land owner over perceived injustice (Matt 20:1-16).⁸ Acts 15:36-40 describes a heated conflict between Paul and Barnabus over differing value systems—recovering a weak servant versus protecting the integrity of church planting. In all these and other biblical examples both good and evil influenced individual motivations, resulting in conflict.

One factor deacons should consider with individual motivations is what the Bible describes as the flesh nature in man. The flesh describes the lost sinful nature people live in before they come to Christ⁹ and struggle with after they belong to Christ. Galatians 5:13 says that the flesh nature in believers seeks opportunities to exert itself. Paul exhorts believers in Galatians 5:14 to resist such drives by acting in love. Finally, in Galatians 5:15, Paul warns of the impact of flesh-driven conflicts: "But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another." Flesh-driven conflicts involve a variety of evil motives including fear and insecurity, power and prestige, recognition and rewards, and humanistic love. An understanding of how the flesh nature is impacting a conflict can both help the deacon stay focussed on primary issues and understand motivations central to the parties in conflict.¹⁰

⁸Gangel, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 167-72.

⁹Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), s.v. "Flesh."

¹⁰A partial catalog of the works of the flesh is recounted in Gal 5:19-21, 2 Tim 3:2-7, and Rom 1:18-32. The solution to the works of the flesh is in developing the spiritual nature that comes by the new birth (Gal 5:16-18; Rom 8:12-14).

Source 2—organizational challenges. Conflicts also originate from within groups dealing with organizational challenges. Groups are made of differing individuals who bring a variety of backgrounds, influences, and vulnerabilities to the group. Shifts in culture, the economy, and the political landscapes can all create tensions within groups and organizations. Twenty-first century churches face organizational issues that can cause conflict among people with differing values, experiences, and interests. Examples of organizational challenges in churches include growth dynamics, paradigm shifts, roles of clergy and laity, power versus authority (who influences and who leads), contemporary versus traditional (music and methods), financial and scheduling priorities, and quantity versus quality (evangelism versus discipleship focus).¹¹

Functional challenges also precipitate conflicts within groups and organizations. Functional challenges refer to common issues individuals face when trying to operate at work, home, school, church, or recreation. Individuals come into conflict when activities functionally challenge their need for identity, security, control, recognition, and fairness.¹² Examples include unclear or duplicated work responsibilities, competition for resources, communication barriers, dependence of parties upon each other, complex organizational structure, and behavioral regulations (procedures, rules, and policies).¹³ Other conflicts arising from functional challenges among group workers include issues of resources,

¹¹Fred W. Prinzing, *Handling Church Tension Creatively* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harvest Publishing, 1986), 5-6.

¹²Ruth Perlstein and Gloria Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities for Secondary Students: Strategies for Dealing with Conflict in Real-Life Situations plus Guidelines for Creating a Peer Mediation Program* (West Nyack, NY: The Center For Applied Research in Education, 1996), 6.

¹³Larry L. McSwain and William C. Treadwell, Jr., *Conflict Ministry in the Church* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 90-91.

preferences and nuisances, values, beliefs, and the nature of the relationship between the parties.¹⁴

One complication deacons should consider in dealing with group and organizational challenges is the impact of the world (Greek word, *kosmos*). Not only does the Bible say that people have a fallen nature, the creation itself exists in a fallen state and is alienated from God. The world or *kosmos*, in which individuals and groups function, is evil and exerts influences which rival the wisdom of God.¹⁵ A deacon who understands biblical standards can better consider the impact of the *kosmos* in group-oriented conflicts.

Source 3—spiritual forces. Conflicts can also be influenced by spiritual forces. Paul in Ephesians 6:10-13 exhorts believers to take a stand against spiritual forces by putting on the armor of God:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Spiritual forces does not refer to the personification of evil through governmental systems, but the actual influence of the devil and demons.¹⁶ Throughout the Bible it is clear that the devil and demons have the ability to exert influences on people.¹⁷ The devil successfully

¹⁴Morton Deutsch, *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 15-16.

¹⁵Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "World."

¹⁶Ray Summers, *Ephesians: Pattern for Christian Living* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), 142.

¹⁷Derek Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons: What You Need to Know about*

tempted Adam and Eve (Gen 3). The Lord sent an evil spirit to torment Saul (1 Sam 16:14-16). David was enticed by Satan to disobediently number his troops (1 Chron 21:1). Satan personally entered Judas to incite him to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3). Thus, spiritual forces can both initiate and/or inflame conflict between people.

When it comes to spiritual forces deacons need to realize, based on Ephesians 6:12, that those spiritual forces are the true enemy in any conflict, not people (flesh and blood). A deacon must also realize that spiritual forces seek to entice people to bypass faith in favor of human common sense, which Romans 14:23 identifies as sin.¹⁸ In the midst of conflict it is vital for deacons to put on the whole armor of God, especially if called upon to provide mediation. It is also vital that deacons memorize and utilize the word of God to counter demonic deception as Jesus modeled in Luke 4:4.

Step 2—Deciding on the Level of Intervention

Deacons by identification and calling are ministers of conflict resolution, yet deacons do not apply conflict resolution skills the same way in every circumstance. Sometimes deacons help resolve conflict with minimal personal intervention. Sometimes deacons mediate serious situations. And there are conflict resolution activities that fall between very little and intense mediation. Three basic levels of intervention are suggested to deacons in the resolution of conflict.

Demons—Your Invisible Enemies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 16. ‘The Greek noun *daimon* gives rise to a verb *daimonizo*, which occurs about 12 times in the New Testament. The obvious English equivalent of this verb is *demonize*, which the Collins English Dictionary defines as ‘to subject to demon influence.’ In the New Testament this verb occurs only in the passive form: ‘to be demonized.’”

¹⁸Ron Susek, *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 110.

Individual-Only (Minimal Intervention)

The first level of conflict resolution intervention is Individual-Only.

Individual-Only refers to a conflict within an individual that requires minimal intervention.

One classification of this type of conflict is called “Intrapersonal.”¹⁹ Intrapersonal means

the individual has conflict within himself resulting from internal war of choices with accompanying anxiety, frustration, and guilt. The evidence of such conflict may show up in the person’s demeanor and actions, and may cause discomfort in others around them.

The person in conflict may be troubled, but not act as a troublemaker. Other parties (family, friends, workers) may be concerned, but there is no resolution apart from the troubled person changing from within. One danger from intrapersonal is that the conflicted person may reject resolution and quit, which can happen frequently in churches. Mels Carbonell calls this the “hide and heal syndrome”; people who leave churches hurt and carry it with them to the new place.²⁰

What is the responsibility of the deacon in Individual-Only cases? Minimal intervention means first, pray. If God alone is their answer, and the person must change to find resolution, any third-party intervention may relieve the troubled person of the pressure God may be exerting to accomplish needed change. Second, share love by appropriate exhortations and encouragement to those in conflict. One other action a deacon can take is to dissuade others from prematurely intervening. Giving someone

¹⁹Gaskins, “Church Conflict and Church Growth,” 11.

²⁰Mels Carbonell, *What Makes You Tick. What Ticks You Off: Understanding How Your Natural Personality and Supernatural Spiritual Gifts Relate to Each Other. Ministry and Conflict!* (Blue Ridge, GA: Uniquely You Resources, 1997), 221.

space to work out their internal conflicts with God (quietly supported by other's prayers) can be the most loving action.

One-On-One (Limited Intervention)

The second level of conflict resolution is One-On-One intervention.

One-On-One refers to conflicts that should stay between conflicted parties, requiring limited intervention by others outside the conflict. These types of conflict may be on an interpersonal level. Interpersonal conflicts may start out as substantive (real issues), caused by differences of opinion on issues of significant importance, but end up personal (damaged trust), causing hard feelings.²¹ The resolution lies between the two conflicting parties and God. Where there is sin involved in the conflict, Jesus in Matthew 18:15 gives us the resolution process: "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."²²

What is the responsibility of the deacon in One-On-One cases? First, pray and depend on God's power to intervene and on His leadership to guide. Second, the deacon must not listen to either of the disputing parties if they try to draw him into the conflict before speaking with one another. The deacon can equip one or both of the conflicted

²¹Gaskins, "Church Conflict and Church Growth," 11. Interpersonal conflict refers to an individual with negative feelings and attitudes toward another person. The feelings are not rooted primarily in differences over particular issues but over personality, beliefs, expectations, and ways of thinking (dislike each other).

²²The first step of conflict resolution, according to Matt 18:15-16, has several primary considerations. First, the conflict involves believers (brothers). Second, the conflict concerns sin, not personality differences, cultural clashes, dysfunctional imaginations (speculations), or socioeconomic status. Third, the conflict is personal ("against you" in some translations). Fourth, the offended party must go to the offender alone in order to protect reputations, preserve peace in the church, and honor the name of the Lord.

parties with the Matthew 18:15 principle. An example of not listening to One-On-One conflicts is when a person complains to a deacon about the pastor. The deacon should point the offended person to follow Matthew 18:15 (go talk to the pastor). The deacon, by taking positive action, is obeying 1 Timothy 5:19, which says, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses." Third, the deacon can deter others outside the conflict resolution process from getting involved, lest they become part of the problem themselves. As men who hold to the mystery of the faith, deacons have the opportunity to apply and model scriptural principles.

Group Mediation (Intense Intervention)

The third level of conflict resolution is Group Mediation, a level requiring intense intervention. A mediator is like a coach who knows the game plan. Mediators are sometimes referred to as arbiters. Halverstadt says,

An arbiter is a party whose interests - purposes, needs, desires, or responsibilities relate only to the conflicting differences between principals. Arbiters are needed by all parties when efforts to manage and resolve a conflict constructively fail.²³

Group Mediation (intervention) is the highest level of involvement by a deacon in the process of conflict resolution.

What is the responsibility of the deacon in Group Mediation? First, the deacon must pray and depend on the Lord's leadership. Second, as with the other two intervention levels, the deacon should restrain others outside the conflict from involving themselves. Third, the deacon could serve as a mediator in the conflict and should be

²³Hugh F. Halverstadt, *Managing Church Conflict* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 50.

prepared to do all that is necessary to bring about biblical resolution. Where sin is involved, Jesus outlined two other resolution steps in Matthew 18:16-17 if mediation fails:

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Deacons may have to serve as a Matthew 18 witness in a conflict involving sin. He may also be called to participate with enacting Jesus' third step—church discipline of a sinning brother. While painful, such intervention preserves unity (health) in the church body.

Step 3—Discerning and Employing Conflict Management Styles

Deacons and the people they serve manage conflict in different ways. A conflict management style is primarily a person's pattern of behavior or natural response to conflict (tense situations). However, a person is not limited to his or her natural response, but can apply any management style appropriate to a particular situation. A deacon who can interpret his and others' conflict management styles can better serve the process of resolution. In the 1970s Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann classified five main preferred styles people use in dealing with conflict: avoiding, accommodating, compromising, collaborating, and forcing.²⁴

Avoiding

The first style of dealing with conflict is *Avoiding*. Avoiding is the withdrawal or "No Way" approach. People who use this style avoid a conflict by pretending it does

²⁴*Conflict Resolution*, Mind Tools [on-line]; accessed 16 October 2008; available from http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_81.htm; Internet.

not exist.²³ The avoidance approach has been compared to turtles, snails, and shy kittens which run, hide, or deny. While the approach works when there is physical danger or a need to pick your battles, it does not resolve conflict (the conflict resurfaces later).²⁴ A publication called Mind Tools states the limitations of the conflict avoiding approach:

This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem. However in many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take.²⁵

Conflict avoidance can include a sense of hopelessness, fear, lack of caring, and relational walls. Romans 12:18 calls for believers to be at peace with all men, if possible. Ephesians 4:25 calls for speaking truth to one another. Deacons can use these and other scriptures to exhort and encourage believers to actively face conflict in a biblical way.²⁶

Deacons should remember that those who use conflict avoidance (avoiders) tend to see avoiding conflict as the lesser of two evils. This is especially true in marriages where, for example, there may be thirteen problems between spouses but only one conversation between them.²⁷ Avoiders may be deceived, believing a real conflict is not as large as it really is. Avoiders may see resolution as a low priority and think that they

²³Nan Peck, *Styles of Conflict*, Conflict 101—Styles of Fighting, 2005 [on-line]; accessed 16 October 2008; available from <http://www.nvcc.edu/home/npeck/conflict/home/conflict/Personal/personal.htm>; Internet.

²⁴Perlstein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 32.

²⁵*Conflict Resolution*, Mind Tools.

²⁶*Styles of Conflict Management*, Peace and Justice Support Network of the Mennonite Church USA [on-line]; accessed 16 October 2008; available from <http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/conflictstyle/styles.html>; Internet.

²⁷Dudley D. Cahn, ed., *Intimates of Conflict: A Communication Perspective* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1990), 49.

cannot be involved in every little problem that surfaces. The choice of conflict avoidance may be a short-term solution, but it tends to bring long-term consequences. In the attempt to avoid pain those who avoid conflict resolution face the danger of becoming or appearing indifferent and insensitive.¹⁰ Deacons themselves must strive not to be avoiders and must be prepared to engage those who choose avoidance.

Accommodating

The second style of dealing with conflict is *Accommodating*. Accommodating is the give in or "Your Way" approach. People who use this style seek to make peace by getting past a sticking point—let the opposing person have his/her way. Accommodating means "be gracious and roll with the punches." Like conflict avoidance, this approach generally requires lower courage. Accommodating can carry with it the potential of resentment.¹¹ The accommodation approach is like the friendly but docile dog who wants love above all else.¹² A publication of Mind Tools summarizes the accommodation style:

This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning, or when you want to be in a position to collect on this "favor" you gave. However people may not return favors, and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes.¹³

¹⁰Keith Hattenlocker, *Conflict and Caring: Preventing, Managing, and Resolving Conflict in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 28-29.

¹¹Peck, *Styles of Conflict*.

¹²Perlestein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 32.

¹³*Conflict Resolution*, Mind Tools.

Conflict accommodation can mean giving up on important issues and sacrificing what is right. First Corinthians 13:4-5 describes the true nature of love (which will not accommodate sin), and Ephesians 4:15 tells us to speak the truth in love in order to experience spiritual growth. Deacons can use these and other scriptures to encourage active love and intentional spiritual growth.¹⁴

Like conflict avoiding, accommodation tends to seek peace at any price. One reason avoiding conflict may be preferred is the emotional aspect. Some may feel that conflict is unchristian, especially if it involves anger, guilt, and resentment. Often an avoider or accommodator may struggle with anger as he plays over and over in his mind the objectionable actions of the offender. Guilt over what was spoken or done may follow anger, especially if there are feelings of resentment. Anxiety and frustration can rise up concerning the future.¹⁵ A deacon who has a grasp of the scriptures, especially the Bible's instructions on how believers are to treat one another,¹⁶ can help conflicted parties bring difficult emotions into proper balance and bring disclosure from others whose style is accommodation.

Compromising

The third style of dealing with conflict is *Compromising*. Compromising is the middle ground or "Half Way" approach. People use this style to negotiate for partial

¹⁴Styles of Conflict, Peace and Justice Support Network.

¹⁵Huttenlocker, *Conflict and Caring*, 19-22.

¹⁶Stephen Simpson, *Take the Scripture Memory Challenge: The One-Another's and Each-Other's of the Bible* [on-line]; accessed 17-April 2009; available from <http://www.memoryverses.org/smcc/oneanother.htm>; Internet. The one-another verses compiled in this article provide both instruction and motivation in obeying the Lord in resolving conflict (applying forgiveness) and rebuilding trust (relationship restoration).

satisfaction by applying courage and/or consideration to seek common ground.³⁷ The compromising approach has been compared to a clever fox who shares the prizes and lives with the solution. The compromising approach can be ineffective when disputants get angry with a short-term solution and start focusing on what they have given away.³⁸ A publication of Mind Tools summarizes compromising:

Everyone is expected to give up something, and the compromiser him or herself also expects to relinquish something. Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming.³⁹

Conflict compromising can mean giving up on important issues and sacrificing what is right. Deacons can refer to Matthew 5:25 to exhort believers to come to terms in a timely way and apply Matthew 7:12 to motivate discovery of the best solution.⁴⁰

One primary danger in compromise is parties settling on self-centered goals. Even if both parties get what they want, they both can lose on a larger scale. Deacons need to think on a "V/in/Win" level, which Steven Covey describes as mutually beneficial behavior that is principle-centered.⁴¹ Successful compromises such as amiable no-fault divorces are unacceptable because they violate scriptural principles. Pastors and deacons

³⁷Peck, *Styles of Conflict*.

³⁸Perlstein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 32.

³⁹*Conflict Resolution*, Mind Tools.

⁴⁰*Styles of Conflict*, Peace and Justice Support Network.

⁴¹Michael Gray, *Seven Habits Condensed Summary* [on-line]; accessed 7 March 2009; available from <http://www.profitadvisors.com/7habitlist.shtml>; Internet. Grey summarizes Habit 4 of Steven Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Other philosophies of human interaction are Win/Lose (competition), Lose/Win (The "Doormat" paradigm), Lose/Lose (make the other person lose even at your own expense), Win (achieve my wants only), and Win/Win or No Deal (agree to disagree).

can compromise on church polity, but it may not align with the Bible. Compromise can only be valid when it does not violate God's Word and when it produces biblical unity.

Collaborating

The fourth style of dealing with conflict is *Collaborating*. Collaborating is the talk and listen or "Our Way" approach. People who use this style apply a lot of courage in clarifying goals and looking for areas of agreement.⁴² The collaborating approach has been compared to the wise thinking of the owl, squirrel, or dolphin. Collaborators explore alternatives and typically produce the most satisfactory long-term resolution to conflict. Collaborating is useful when there is adequate time to balance tasks or issues with relational disputants.⁴³ A publication of Mind Tools describes those using the collaborating approach:

These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when a [sic] you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple tradeoff.⁴⁴

Collaborating is generally a favored style. Scriptures deacons can apply to collaboration include James 3:17-18, which describes righteous wisdom, and Colossians 3:12-13, which describes virtues to embrace and forgiveness to offer.⁴⁵

Collaboration is most closely associated with conflict management (resolution) problem-solving. Collaboration defines the problem and looks for positive solutions for all

⁴²Peck, *Styles of Conflict*.

⁴³Perlstein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 32.

⁴⁴*Conflict Resolution*, Mind Tools.

⁴⁵*Styles of Conflict*, Peace and Justice Support Network.

parties.⁴⁶ Active participation is encouraged and passive involvement is discouraged. Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is the primary tool in collaborating to solve problems.⁴⁷ Deacons involved in mediation will primarily use this approach in resolving conflict.

Forcing

The fifth style of dealing with conflict is *Forcing*. Forcing is the stand your ground or "My Way" approach. People who use this style compete with the opposing party with the goal of winning, even if it sacrifices the relationship.⁴⁸ The forcing approach is like lions and tigers who are authoritarian. Forcing calls for winning the argument, getting the prize, and beating the other person. Forcing is effective in an emergency or when standing for principles.⁴⁹ A publication of Mind Tools describes those who use the forcing (competitive) approach:

People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made [sic] fast; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly. However it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations.⁵⁰

⁴⁶Perlstein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 117.

⁴⁷Henry Clay Lindgren, *The Art of Human Relations* (New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1954), 140-41. Lindgren identifies verbal communication as symbolic (written and spoken language, signs, and gestures) and nonverbal communication as empathetic (beyond the limits of awareness; exchange of feeling-tone).

⁴⁸Peck, *Styles of Conflict*.

⁴⁹Perlstein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 31.

⁵⁰*Conflict Resolution*, Mind Tools.

Forcing is a hard approach for many people. Leviticus 19:18 warns against taking vengeance and bearing grudges, and teaches loving neighbors as oneself. Acts 5:27-29 demonstrates the apostles using the forcing approach as they respectfully stood their ground on obeying God.⁵¹ Deacons can apply Scriptures such as these to determine the proper application of the forcing approach.

Forcing has also been described as the conquest approach; the other party is removed by the victor. While this approach may at times seem extreme,⁵² there are instances where the approach has to be respected by the deacon. Where sin abounds, spiritual authorities must act and be victorious. God told Joshua on a number of occasions to wipe out their enemies, not collaborate with them. Parents at times must take hard stands and not compromise in the training of their children. Deacons must use spiritual discernment in applying scripture in order to determine when forcing is appropriate.

Step 4—Applying Mediation When Necessary

The fourth step in the process of conflict resolution is apply mediation when necessary. In step 2 we learned that deacons can intervene by prayer, encouragement, and by keeping others out of the conflict. When help is necessary, mediation can be applied. Mediation is a form of collaboration utilized to bring resolution between individuals or groups. According to Perlstein and Thrall,

Mediation is a process in which a third party helps disputants solve their problems by guiding them through the collaborative problem-solving process. Like a police officer directing, helping people get their bearings toward the destination. Help

⁵¹ Styles of Conflict, Peace and Justice Support Network.

⁵² Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 309.

threatened people find safety, those who feel out of control to find balance, those who feel insignificant to feel important.⁵³

Biblical mediation is a response to Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18:16:

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witness every fact may be confirmed.

The witnesses function as mediators, like a referee—someone outside the conflict who combines observation skills with a fair spirit to bring about resolution and help prevent further injuries.⁵⁴ Four general steps are suggested for deacon-led mediation meetings where the deacon serves as a witness to the reconciliation process.

First—Establishing Purpose

The first action in the mediation process is to establish the purpose of the conflict resolution meeting with both parties (individuals or groups). Before the meeting the deacon should get both parties to agree to a meeting that is face-to-face.⁵⁵

Face-to-face encounters will guard against taking sides and will limit exaggerations, fabrications, and suspicions. Face-to-face meetings help avoid wasting time when speaking separately, and promote the taking of responsibility. The place the deacon chooses for the meeting should be neutral and be prepared ahead of time to maximize communication.⁵⁶

⁵³Perlstein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 141.

⁵⁴McSwain and Treadwell, *Conflict Ministry in the Church*, 88.

⁵⁵Beverly Potter, *From Conflict to Cooperation* (Berkeley, CA: Ronin Publishing, 1996), 13-14.

⁵⁶Ibid., 18-21. Potter suggest that the arrangement of furniture can impact each party's comfort level. The arrangement of chairs should encourage eye contact.

When the parties come together for the meeting the deacon should seek agreement from both parties on the meeting agenda (actions 2-4 below). As mediator, the deacon should also lay out key principles of reconciliation he believes are vital to the particular resolution process. Examples of sharing principles would be reading or quoting from the Bible any of the one-anothers in the New Testament appropriate to the conflict issue.⁵⁷ Deacons may want to communicate two other general principles—first, keep relationships the priority and second, keep people and problems separate.⁵⁸ When both parties agree to the meeting terms the last part of establishing purpose is for the deacon to lead out in prayer and seek the Lord's will for the meeting. Prayer brings humble submission to the Lord's will and reliance on His power. Prayer also establishes with all parties involved that the deacon is only a mediator functioning under the Prince of Peace—the primary mediator in any conflict.

Second—Setting Out the Facts

The second action in the mediation process is to set out the facts of the conflict. One or both parties may be more concerned about their feelings, but without agreement on the facts of the conflict, understanding and response to feelings will be more difficult. Depending on the intensity of the situation each party can share their version of the facts one person at a time. In other cases it will be more advantageous for the parties to sequentially cover one fact at a time with the mediator asking questions along the way and both parties verifying or clarifying the facts as they see them. Either way, sharing of facts

⁵⁷Simpson, *Take the Scripture Memory Challenge*.

⁵⁸*Understanding The Theory: The Interest-Based Relational Approach*, Mind Tools [on-line]; accessed 18 October 2008; available from http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_81.htm; Internet.

meets the need to establish understanding and common ground. Common ground promotes the building of trust so the real offenses and feelings can be successfully addressed. Training in the skill of gathering facts will be advantageous to the deacon.⁵⁹

In setting out the facts the deacon must both model and encourage good listening. The desired end result of effective listening is a good understanding of and agreement to the facts of the conflict. In general the deacon himself should model and encourage parties to listen first; talk second. A rule of thumb for the deacon is listen to the disputants 80 percent of the time and speak the other 20 percent of the time.⁶⁰ Failure to listen deepens conflict when a person feels his or her point of view is not being heard by others.⁶¹

Listening is not limited by natural talent; it is a set of skills that can be learned and improved with exercise. One listening skill is "reflective listening" where the listener restates the sender's words as they understand them (reflects back) in order to prevent distorting or misunderstanding the sender's message.⁶² The reflective approach affirms the

⁵⁹Potter, *From Conflict to Cooperation*, 16-59. Fact-gathering principles Potter outlines are (1) bring the disputants together (2) maintain control (3) establish rapport (4) don't agree or sympathize; appear to take sides (5) don't talk too much; discourages information-gathering (6) don't be interviewed; lose control by answering their questions (7) don't lead disputants (8) avoid closed questions; yes/no (9) keep disputants on topic; keep from straying on unrelated issues (10) mediate one problem at a time; too much confuses and raises resistance (11) focus on the current problem; leave out past offenses (12) maintain impartial; don't jump to conclusions (13) get specific information; guards against jumping to conclusions (14) accept each disputant's view; how each sees the problem (15) don't make suggestions; don't try to solve while gathering facts (16) encourage disputants to express their feelings.

⁶⁰Ibid., 35.

⁶¹Perlstein and Thrall, *Ready to Use Conflict Resolution Activities*, 53.

⁶²G. Douglass Lewis, *Resolving Church Conflicts* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1981), 55.

other party. People tend to attach greater importance to their own words over the words of the other party, so reflecting back affirms the importance of what was said.⁴³ A deacon should also learn other listening skills to improve as a mediator.⁴⁴

Third—Exploring Options

The third action in the mediation process is to explore options together. This action requires that the other principles of conflict resolution have been observed and honored. Exploring options together allows parties to be open to the idea that a third position may exist, and it can be discovered jointly. Exploring options together can foster trust between parties and increase morale and productivity in organizations. As trust begins building, exploring options can develop or improve friendships.

Whether the deacon is dealing with individuals or groups, several options exist. One option is to end the meeting without total resolution. There are times when the parties do not agree on the facts. Lack of agreement may result from falsification of the truth or misunderstanding of events, especially where personal offenses take place among individuals. When resolution is impossible because a consensus cannot be reached about the facts, the meeting must end with all parties leaving the situation in the Lord's hand until something new develops. Another option is that one party agrees to the offense. When the guilty party realizes the wrong, they have the option to humbly confess the offense, or pridefully hold to their position, thus maintaining the conflict and refusing to

⁴³Ibid., 52.

⁴⁴Gangel, *Communication and Conflict Management*, 48-95. Gangel offers ten ways to improve listening skills, outlines the importance of nonverbal skills, and provides ten ways of positively sending nonverbal messages.

change. When no repentance is voiced from the guilty party, the deacon must point out to both parties that the final two options Jesus gives in Matthew 18:17 must be enacted:

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

The best option is that both parties come to the right conclusion about doing what is right and correcting any wrongs, in which case the deacon simply must assist exploring options to their best end.

Fourth—Making a Commitment

The fourth action in the mediation process is to make a commitment (act in faith) by applying the first three actions. Without a commitment to do what is right, one or more parties commits sin,⁶⁵ which introduces new issues into the existing conflict. Both parties and the deacon have commitments to make in any mediation meeting.

There are three basic situations where commitments can be made. In the first case, where there is no agreement to the facts and no other witnesses to the truth, the deacon, while he may lean one way or another, cannot take sides. In such cases the deacon can address the issues relating to the conflict, share biblical insights, then leave the situation with God and the other two parties. He must also encourage and admonish both parties not to spread the conflict to anyone else. In the second case, where one or both parties realizes they have sinned, the commitment of the guilty party is to confess the sin with sorrow, and seek forgiveness from those offended. The offended party must commit to forgive and rebuild the relationship to the limits of ongoing, earned trust. Furthermore, the deacon can facilitate restoration or simply be available if either party needs assistance

⁶⁵James 4:17 says, "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."

in moving forward. In the third case, where there is recognized but unconfessed sin by the guilty party, the commitment of the deacon is to warn both parties that the unresolved conflict shall be reported to the elders (representing the church). The elders must commit to mediate a new meeting with both parties and the deacon to seek restoration or facilitate disfellowship of the sinning party (Matt 18:17). In all cases, the deacon should close the meeting in prayer and maintain confidentiality to all commitments made.

Conclusions

Three conclusions emerge regarding deacons and conflict resolution. First, conflicts are potentially dangerous to the church, and deacons can play an important role in the conflict resolution process. In Acts 6 the Greek widow conflict could have severely damaged the unity and message of the church, but the quick decision of the apostles and effective ministry of the prototype deacons preserved unity and the gospel spread greatly.

Second, spiritual leadership (elders and deacons) and the entire church can greatly benefit from conflict resolution training. Elders and deacons must set the example by what they learn (training) and practice (doing). The Bible (taught and preached) is the primary source and motivation for conflict resolution training among God's people. Secular sources that come by way of natural revelation can also be useful when they compliment the application of biblical truth in practical living.

Third, resolving conflict in a biblical manner is very important to the health of God's church. Jeffrey Gaskins performed a study of several Southern Baptist Churches who experienced conflict.⁶⁶ His conclusions speak to the importance of biblical conflict resolution. First, internal church conflict hinders church growth (between 20-40%

⁶⁶Gaskins, "Church Conflict and Church Growth," 168-75.

membership loss in the churches studied). Second, a healthy relationship between the pastor and church members is essential. Third, deacons play an important role when functioning as servants (spawn growth, limit conflict, serve as peacemakers). Fourth, conflict prevention strategies are needed (speaking the truth in love). Fifth, mediation at later stages of conflict is ineffective (waiting too late usually means defeat). Sixth, biblical reconciliation and resolution is essential for sustained growth.

Conflict is certain to impact all churches. The question is how will spiritual leadership respond when conflict occurs. Conflict will either damage or enhance church unity, impacting Christ's Great Commission. Like the seven men of Acts 6, today's deacons help God's church gain and maintain unity in the fellowship by who they are (model servants) and by what they do (meet physical needs and assist elders).

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DEACON MINISTRY

Introduction

A vital strategy of Grace Baptist Church in carrying out Christ's Great Commission is developing a biblical deacon ministry. Great Commission results can be equated as spiritual fruit, indicated by the words of Jesus in John 15:8: "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." A key factor in creating a church environment that bears spiritual fruit is the development of spiritual leadership.¹ The strength of the membership can be tied to the strength of elders (pastors) and deacons (model servants). This chapter focuses on Grace Baptist Church's development of a biblical deacon ministry.

A number of challenges are always present in developing a biblical deacon ministry. One challenge is to ensure that biblical standards for selecting deacons are understood. Another challenge is to unify church members around that biblical standard. The difficulty in unifying people around a biblical standard lies in the varying spiritual backgrounds, church experiences, and personal opinions of church members. The result of such diversity is reflected in the criteria of deacon selection such as gender, ministry function, and spiritual maturity requirements. Compounding the challenge, the Bible has

¹At Grace Baptist Church we are using the image of a tree bearing fruit where elders represent the root system, deacons represent the trunk, ministry leaders represent the limbs, and member-ministers represent the branches (where fruit emerges).

limited information on how deacons minister as individuals or groups. The challenge of such limited information is whether people will center their understanding and application of deacon ministry to servanthood in assisting elders (1 Tim 3 and Acts 6), or borrow from secular models and church traditions (e.g., Deacon Board of Directors).

In order to meet the challenges of developing a biblical deacon ministry at Grace Baptist Church there needed to be a clear understanding of who deacons are, what they are to do, and their working relationship with the biblical elders (overseers) who pastor God's church. To limit confusion I preached on both elder and deacon roles during the first two weeks of June, 2008 and announced the need to develop spiritual leadership in our church. Then, in September, 2008 more emphasis was placed on elders as we added Philip Beyer as Associate Pastor of Grace Baptist Church. Electronic copies of both June sermons and the Philip Beyer proposal materials were placed on the church's web site. The links to these web addresses were placed in the bulletin to encourage church members to review the files in preparation for the deacon project. The deacon project would begin in February, 2009, commencing a sixteen-week process of preaching, surveys, and group training to meet the need of selecting and developing biblical deacons.

Defining Biblical Deacon Ministry: Congregational Activities

On January 11, 2009, I started promoting the upcoming deacon project from the pulpit and in the church bulletin. The project began on February 8 with a congregational survey and the first of three messages on deacons and deacon ministry. February 8 was also the start date for a seven-week series of training held on Sunday

evenings. Sunday evening training was divided into 3 groups: Men's Service Training (open to all men), *On Mission With God*² study for all women, and a children's group.

Survey 1—Week 1

In Week 1 of the Deacon Project I administered a survey to the congregation in the Sunday morning service (see Appendix 1). The survey was given just before I preached the first message on deacon ministry. The purpose of the survey was to determine the people's biblical understanding of who deacons are and what deacons are to do. Fifty-seven adults (25 men and 32 women) completed the 12 question survey (see Table A1 in Appendix 2). Of the 57 adults who completed the survey, 76 percent had been in church over 20 years (see Table A2 in Appendix 2). Eighty-two percent were members of Grace Baptist Church, 15 percent were regular attendees, and 3 percent were guests (see Table A3 in Appendix 2).

Four main conclusions can be drawn from the first survey. First, 74 percent understood that the basic meaning of deacon (*diakonos*) was servant (see Table A4 in Appendix 2). Second, the survey indicated that our people were willing to accept a lower standard of deacon selection than the Bible's standard of model servants.³ Third, there

²Avery T. Willis, Jr. and Henry T. Blackaby, *On Mission with God: Living God's Purpose for His Glory* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2005).

³Question 2 indicated that only 25 percent recognized that the Bible's emphasis on deacons was on the quality of the man (his qualifications), and 36 percent believed the Bible's emphasis was on a deacon's ministry function (see Table A5 in Appendix 2). Question 11 indicated that more than 51 percent of the people were willing to accept men as deacons who were in either the children's or young men's stage of spiritual development, as described in 1 John 2:12-14. The remaining 49 percent believed deacons must be men who are at the spiritual fathers stage (see Table A13 in Appendix 2).

was only a moderate level of confusion between the roles of elder and deacon.⁴ Fourth, the congregation demonstrated a high degree of respect for the role of biblical deacon.⁵

Preaching Series—Weeks 1-3

In Weeks 1-3, during the Sunday morning services, I preached three messages on who deacons are and what deacons are to do. Each message was a summary application from the texts in chapter 2. All three messages aimed at providing general understanding and conclusions derived from basic observations of all three biblical texts.

Message 1—“The Importance of Selecting Model Servants” (Acts 6:1-7).

On February 8, 2009 I preached the first message entitled, “The Importance of Selecting Model Servants” from Acts 6:1-7.⁶ The introduction came from John 13:1-20, where Jesus demonstrated true greatness through His service to the disciples as He washed their feet. Next I testified to the congregation the difficulty of trying to define biblical deacon ministry by starting from personal experiences in the present and interpreting scripture

“Question 1 indicated that only 23 percent viewed deacons as church leaders, not servants (see Table A4 in Appendix 2). Question 3 revealed that 51 percent believed deacons should only meet as a ministry group to meet needs (see Table A6 in Appendix 2). Question 9 indicated that only 16 percent recognized that deacons do not have a biblical job description and 55 percent saw deacons functioning as supporters of elders in their work (see Table A9 in Appendix 2). Finally, 47 percent recognized deacons do not set the direction of the church (see Table A12 in Appendix 2).

⁴Question 5 overwhelmingly revealed that 93 percent believed in the value of having a biblical deacon ministry (see Table A8 in Appendix 2). Question 11 indicated that the people’s top qualification of a deacon was ‘holding to the mystery of the faith’ (see Table A13 in Appendix 2). Question 7 showed that 82 percent of the people know biblical deacons are to be men (see Table A10 in Appendix 2).

⁵Chapter 2 points out that all Christians are to be servants (*diakonos*). What sets apart biblical deacons from other Christians in the local church is that they are to be models of spiritual maturity, Christian living, and ministry activity.

based on those experiences. Then I mentioned that clarity came when I started from the beginning (Acts 6 and 1 Tim 3) and applied biblical truth from those passages to the present (existing experience). Next I pointed out that the English word, deacon, derives from the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning servant; only in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Philippians 1:1 is *diakonos* translated, deacon, referring to a special group of servants. Finally, we explored Acts 6:1-7, that shows the seven men were likely the prototype deacons who met physical needs, preserved unity in the church, and assisted the apostles (early elders) in shepherding God's church.

Message 2—"The Measure of Spiritual Maturity" (1 John 2:12-14). On February 15, 2009, I preached the second message in the deacon sermon series, entitled, "The Measure of Spiritual Maturity" from 1 John 2:12-14. Because deacons are model servants, the emphasis of the message was that deacons, along with elders, model spiritual maturity for the entire church. In describing spiritual maturity the message focused on the three stages of spiritual development (children, young men, and fathers). What made the message so successful was the introduction of a spiritual growth chart (see Appendix 3) which was an adaptation of a similar chart developed by Don Maiden, former pastor of NorthRidge Church in Haines City, Florida.⁷ The chart characterized people in spiritual development stages based on comparisons with the physical, mental, and emotional descriptions associated with human development (children, young men, and fathers).

Message 3—"Qualifications of a Model Servant" (1 Tim 3:8-13). On February 22, 2009, I preached the third message in the deacon series entitled

⁷Session 3, In *Experiencing Christian Maturity*, Christian Life and Service Seminar (Haines City, Fl: NorthRidge Church), 2002, 38.

"Qualifications of a Model Servant," from 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The introduction stated that scripture does not have a specific job description for deacons beyond their title (servant), whereas elders do have a biblical job description. On the other hand, the biblical requirements for a deacon's character are of the same quality as that of an elder, with a few minor differences. The Bible's close association of deacons with elders suggest that deacons (with no job description) are to assist elders (with a job description) in accomplishing vital tasks where elders need assistance (Acts 6 model). With this understanding in mind, the first summary qualification made from 1 Timothy 3:8-13 is that deacons must have strong personal character (v. 8). Second, a deacon must have a sincere spiritual life (v. 9). Third, a deacon must have a track record of proven ministry experience (v. 10a). Fourth, a deacon must have a moral life measured by his public behavior and marriage (vv. 10b and 12a). Fifth, a deacon must have demonstrated spiritual leadership in the home (v. 12b). Limited treatment was given to "women" mentioned in verse 11 due to uncertainty whether these women referred to wives of deacons or a separate ministry group.

Survey 2—Week 3

After preaching the third message on deacon ministry, I administered the second survey on biblical deacon ministry to assess the level of understanding gained since the first survey (see Appendix 5). Fifty-two adults completed the second survey with 4 guests participating (see Table A15 in Appendix 5). Of the 52 who completed Survey 2, 15 (29 percent) had not taken Survey 1 two weeks earlier (see Table A17 in Appendix 5).

A comparison of the 2 surveys revealed a significant improvement in some areas, and partial improvement in others.

Answers to three questions indicated significant change. The responses to Question 1 indicate there was a 14 percent increase in the overall belief that deacons are primarily servants; all young adults chose this option (see Table A19 in Appendix 5). In Question 2 (see Table A20 in Appendix 5) there was a 30 percent increase in the belief that the Bible's emphasis on deacons is "Who they are." Question 6 showed the greatest change: there was a 39 percent greater understanding that, unlike elders, deacons do not have a job description (see Table A24 in Appendix 5).

Several questions dealing with biblical understanding of deacon ministry demonstrated low to moderate change. Question 4 revealed there is still confusion as to the primary function of deacons operating as a group with only an 8 percent increase on the "none of the above" option (see Table A22 in Appendix 5). Question 7 had a decrease of 10 percent in the conviction that deacons can be men or women (see Table A25 in Appendix 5). One contributing factor was that 70 percent who did not take the first survey chose the wrong answer for question 7. Question 9 had only a 6 percent increase in the understanding that a deacon's function is not to set the direction of the church (see Table A27 in Appendix 5). Question 11 revealed a 2 percent increase in the conviction that deacons should be at the spiritual fathers stage of spiritual maturity (see Table A28 in Appendix 5).

Opinion questions showed little to moderate change. Question 3 revealed only a 7 percent increase in those who believe that deacons, meeting as a group, should be based on need and not a set time (see Table A21 in Appendix 5). Question 7 showed only

a 1 percent increase in the belief that churches should have a deacon group (see Table A25 in Appendix 5). Question 8 showed a 12 percent shift in people believing that deacons, ministering as individuals, is more important than deacons functioning as a group (see Table A26 in Appendix 5). The rankings in Question 10 saw 3 qualifications with no change, 4 qualifications changing 1 position, and only 1 ranking changing 2 positions (see Table A29 in Appendix 5).

Question 12 of Survey 2 asked those who took Survey 1 what they learned most from the sermon series on deacons and deacon ministry. The most common response was the Bible's emphasis on a deacon's qualifications. The second greatest response was that deacons have no biblical job description. Other responses covered the areas of modeling, a deacon's purpose, what deacons are to do, the husband of one wife qualification, and how to select deacons (see Table A30 in Appendix 5).

Developing Biblical Servants: Men's Service Training

Sunday evenings of Weeks 1-7 were dedicated to leading all interested men through a six-week, servant-development series. The purpose of the training was to focus on the character and function of spiritual servants (who they are and what they do). The series had two primary goals: first, raise the servanthood level in all the men of the church, and second, identify potential model servants (deacon candidates). To encourage men to participate, question 12 of Survey 1 asked the congregation to recommend men as candidates to participate in the training. After the morning service the existing deacons tallied the recommendations from the surveys by name, the number of times each man was recommended, and their numerical rankings. Twenty-nine men were recommended by the

congregation. The three existing deacons targeted and called 19 of the 29 candidates personally to let them know the positive information from the survey and invite them to the men's fellowship that evening.

Men's Fellowship—Week 1

On Sunday evening of Week 1, I invited everyone interested in the Men's Service Training over to my home for a fellowship and orientation session. That morning I had preached the first message on deacon ministry, so my desire was to motivate all men to raise their spiritual service level. At the meeting each man received a six-month calendar with information on the reverse side that outlined the entire sixteen weeks (see Appendix 6). After explaining the men's service training and fielding their questions, I passed out a response form which gave each man the opportunity to indicate his level of interest in the 6-week training (yes, no, maybe). Sixteen men were present at the meeting, which represented 19 percent of the morning's worship service attendance of 83. Only one man said "no," but he came two weeks later to a single session.

Inner Circle Groups—Weeks 2-7

Weeks 2-7 featured the formation of Inner Circles, designed to be groups of three to four, whose primary purpose was to hold basic spiritual accountability, provide prayer support for each other, and facilitate small group learning. Half of each meeting was devoted to Inner Circle small group time. Four group leaders were enlisted ahead of time (3 deacons and 1 elder-in-training), but the men participating in the training were not assigned a leader. At the first meeting (Week 2), four tables were set up with one leader per table. I asked one man at a time to pick his leader. In order to create the greatest

comfort level, I started with the least active man and proceeded until the most active man chose his group leader (or was assigned by default to balance group numbers). In the following weeks, more men joined in; they were incorporated into the existing groups. When the original Inner Circle groups were formed each man was given an Accountability Group form (see Appendix 7), which documented his commitment to participate. It also outlined the study plan.

Throughout the seven-week process, 24 participants (21 men and 3 auditing older teenagers) were involved in inner circle groups (see Appendix 8). With 17 men completing the training process, the weekly small group average was 4 per group plus myself as leader. The average weekly group attendance from all participants (men who completed, men who did not complete, and teen auditors) for the seven weeks was 17.

Inner circle groups started at 6:00 p.m. sharp with a fifteen-minute Inner Circle time. First, the small group leaders recorded the number of days each of his group members completed his Quiet Time (Prayer and Bible reading) the previous week. If a member was not present and had not reported his Bible reading and prayer number, the group had to call him and get the information or he was given a zero. The lowest individual number represented the number for the entire group.

I asked for each group's Quiet Time number (no individual names mentioned). To promote accountability and comradeship a challenge was set up: the group with the lowest number had to bring refreshments for all the groups the following week. This was a fun-spirited competition that encouraged each individual's relationship with God supported by small group accountability.

Small group time continued until 6:15, with the time devoted to sharing needs

and group prayer. At 6:15 all groups participated as I taught the weekly training lesson. During the lesson, an assignment was given. After large group time, around 6:45, we broke into small groups again to work on the assignment. So, each session started and ended with Inner Circle group time.

Personal Qualifications Assessments— Weeks 2-3

In Weeks 2 and 3 of the men's service training, during the large group training time, each man completed three personal qualifications assessments based on the three biblical texts preached in weeks 1-3 (morning worship services). The first assessment called men to gauge their general qualifications as servants based on Acts 6:1-7 (see Appendix 9). The second assessment took place in week 3 where each man was asked to assess his spiritual maturity based on the 1 John 2:12-14 spiritual growth chart (see Appendix 10). The third assessment also took place in Week 3 and called for each man to assess himself based on the specific qualifications for deacons found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 (see Appendix 11). While the questions were pointed, the assessment was not too personal as each man privately kept his own assessments in an individual notebook provided them for the entire series. The intention of the assessments was to encourage all the men, no matter what was their stage of spiritual maturity, to raise their level of effective spiritual service to the Lord. At the end of Week 3, each man was given a slip of paper to complete and turn in to the existing three deacons. The paper had three choices for the men to select: (1) they felt they wanted to be considered as a deacon candidate, or (2) they were not qualified to be a deacon, or (3) they were not ready to be considered as

a deacon candidate. Those papers were collected and given to the existing deacons for the screening that would take place over the next three weeks.

Personal Ministry Assessments—Weeks 4-7

In Weeks 4-7 of the Men's Service Training, the emphasis shifted from character qualifications of spiritual servants (who they are) to ministry assessments of spiritual servants (what they do). During the time we started this phase of the training, the NFL was holding football combines in preparation for the NFL draft. I pointed out that before athletes are drafted and given big contracts, teams spend a great amount of time measuring athletes in all aspects of the game (physical, mental, emotional, and game performance). In similar ways, ministry assessments can help spiritual servants determine how God designed them for spiritual service in this life (discovering their ministry or the improvement process). Several months earlier our church had conducted a TALENTS⁸ seminar. I chose TALENTS as the pattern in helping the men perform their 4-week ministry assessment. The men were given a spiritual gifts and temperaments handout in preparation for Weeks 4 and 5 (see Appendix 13).

Spiritual gifts (Week 4). During the first week of personal ministry assessment the emphasis was on discovering, developing, and deploying of spiritual gifts. Men who had not previously attended the TALENTS seminar met during Sunday School to complete the spiritual gifts portion and receive minimal training.⁹ A six day follow-up

⁸TALENTS is an acronym standing for temperaments (personality), ambitions, leadership style, experiences, needs, talents (abilities), and spiritual gifts.

⁹Mels Carbonell, *Membership and Ministry Profile: Combining 16 Spiritual Gifts with the 4 DISC Personality Types Questionnaire* (Blue Ridge, GA: Uniquely You Resources), 2006.

devotional study on both spiritual gifts and temperaments¹⁰ was given to each man. Next, the group reviewed a handout that explored the Apostle Paul's TALENTS (See Appendix 12). We examined the section that described Paul's spiritual gifts. Next, the group was introduced to several biblical texts relating to spiritual gifts (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12-14; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:10-11). Large group training concluded with some summary thoughts on spiritual gifts. Week 4 ended in small group discussion with an agenda provided on the video screen.¹¹

Personality profile (Week 5). The second week of personal ministry assessments focused on a man's temperament (personality) as another gift of God. As in the previous week, men who had not attended the TALENTS seminar met during Sunday School to complete the temperaments profile and receive minimal training. The evening session opened with small group time followed by a brief overview of the temperaments portion of the Apostle Paul's TALENTS sheet. Next followed a discussion on how both divine and general revelation allow us to explore, understand, and apply temperaments; our personalities explain how we respond to people and situations. We observed how we are a blend of all four personality traits, but have dominant characteristics that define us, and that these characteristics can be properly used or misused. The large group time

¹⁰Mels Carbonell, *Membership and Ministry Action Plan: After Identifying Your Giftedness—Now What?* (Blue Ridge, GA: Uniquely You Resources), 2006. No longer in print. The church purchased the rights to reprint a PDF version of the booklet.

¹¹Small group agenda: (1) Share your top 3 spiritual gifts, (2) Share insights about your gifts (what you understand, what does it mean), (3) Listen to other group members share insights or observations about you and your spiritual gifts, (4) Share how you believe your spiritual gifts could be used to glorify God.

closed with a discussion of applying temperaments by obeying the biblical one another,¹² especially in relationship with wives (1 Pet 3:7a). Week 5 ended in small group discussion time with the group agenda on Power Point.¹³

Ambitions, leadership style, and needs (Week 6). The third week of personal ministry assessment focused on ambitions, leadership style, and needs. After the opening small group time, we reviewed the corresponding areas on the Apostle Paul's TALENTS sheet. The primary discussion on ambitions focused on belief that God designed us with certain passions that motivate us towards certain ministry areas. The discussion on leadership style emphasized that each man can use the combination of his character and personality to motivate others in following God's leadership. The discussion on needs centered on a man's physical, mental, emotional dependencies, and his inherent weaknesses. Needs motivate us to depend on the Lord and live interdependently with believers, turning individual needs to ministry opportunities and advantage. At the previous week's session the group was given a handout (see Appendix 14) to complete a personal assessment of their ambitions, leadership style, and needs. The information from the individually completed handouts, combined with the information learned during the large group discussion time, were applied in the closing small group discussions.¹⁴

¹²Stephen Simpson, *Take the Scripture Memory Challenge: The One-Another's and Each-Other's of the Bible* [on-line]; accessed 17 April 2009; available from <http://www.memoryverses.org/smc/oneanothers.htm>; Internet.

¹³Small group agenda: (1) Share your DISC profile, (2) Share what you learned about yourself, (3) Share how this understanding can make you a better servant? (4) Share what might be the first thing you will do with this understanding?

¹⁴Small group agenda: (1) Share what you learned about yourself, (2) Share one prayer request from "Ambition, Leadership Style, or Need," (3) Share how can this understanding make you a better servant? (4) Share what might be the first thing you will

Abilities, experiences, and evaluation (Week 7). The fourth week of personal ministry assessment focused on abilities, experiences, and a 6-week training evaluation. After the opening small group time, we reviewed the corresponding areas of the Apostle Paul's TALENTS sheet. In the large group time, the discussion on abilities centered on the diversity of God-given abilities. Those abilities may not always be recognized or appreciated, leading to ministry frustration. The large group discussion on experiences focused on identifying key individual events, interpreting them in the larger context of life, and implementing lessons learned from those experiences (painful or pleasant). The week before the group was given a handout (see Appendix 15) to complete a personal assessment on abilities and experiences. The individually completed handouts combined with the large group discussion time were applied in small groups.

Week 7 ended with each man completing an evaluation of the Men's Service Training series (see Appendix 16). The evaluation results was anonymous and covered every aspect of the men's service training (see Appendix 16). All the questions asked the men to rank the level of effectiveness for each portion of the training experience on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. Thirteen men took the evaluation. The average score for Inner Circles was 7.0. The average score for Personal Assessment 1 was 7.7. The average score for Personal Assessment 2 was 8.3. The average score for Personal Assessment 3 was 8.0. The average score for Temperaments was 8.4, which was the highest ranked area. The average score for Ambitions was 7.7. The average score for Leadership Style was 7.8. The average score for Experiences was 8.0. The average score for Needs was 7.8. The average score for Talents (abilities) was 7.4, the lowest ranked do with this understanding?

area. The average score for Spiritual Gifts was 7.8. When the scores of all eleven areas are combined and averaged, the overall Men's Service Training score was 7.8.

Identifying Model Servants –Week 8: New Deacon Selection

Sunday morning of Week 8 was scheduled for the church to select new model servants (deacons) from qualified and screened men from the Men's Servant Training group. Any man who presented himself as a candidate for deacon selection in Week 3 was required to meet with the existing deacons to review his candidacy, based on the personal assessments completed in Weeks 2 and 3. The three existing deacons, representing the congregation's interest, performed the screening to ensure that any candidate was qualified to be a deacon. The desire was to present qualified candidates in Week 7 to be voted on in Week 8.

The church was informed about the deacon selection process in the church bulletin weeks in advance. The deacon selection plan followed the Acts 6 pattern of having elders select the number of deacons needed. Pastor Philip and I both determined that two new deacons should be selected. If the existing deacons had submitted three or more names, the church would have selected the top two, and any other candidate would have been invited to become a deacon in training. As it turned out, the existing deacon group did not complete the screening process until the evening of Week 7, so a candidate's list could not be presented. Instead, the deacon chairman only presented the plan mentioned above. Sunday morning of Week 8 the existing deacon group submitted only two names as candidates for new deacons. Therefore, the church's decision was to

vote "yes" or "no" on each candidate submitted. The vote was overwhelming in the affirmative for both men.

Developing Model Servants: Deacon And Apprentice Training—Weeks 8-16

Weeks 8-16 were dedicated to the development of the new deacon group (five total deacons). Towards the end of the Men's Service Training the existing deacons and elders agreed to include the men who completed Weeks 1-7 in the new training as apprentices. While some of the apprentices would never qualify to serve as a deacon, it was felt that their involvement in the training process would continue to develop them as leaders, blessing the entire church. The training took place on Sunday nights while a missionary led the rest of the congregation through *Eternal Impact*,¹⁵ a ten-week missions-evangelism training seminar. The pattern for these weeks was that the entire congregation would gather to sing one to three songs, then the deacons and apprentices would be dismissed to their inner circle groups. Following inner circles was group training. Each week there was time reserved for other items such as evaluation of the spring cleaning project, evaluation of the three-week sermon series on conflict resolution, and feedback on matters of importance to Grace Baptist.

There were four components in Weeks 8-16. The first component involved the entire congregation as I conducted a three-week preaching series on conflict resolution from Matthew 18.¹⁶ The second component involved two physical needs activities built

¹⁵*Eternal Impact: Discover Your Role in God's Worldwide Purpose* (Littleton, CO: Caleb Resources), 2005.

¹⁶Deacons preserve unity in the church. Conflict resolution skills equip deacons to preserve unity. The preaching series from Matt 18 would provide the entire

around church events during the training time period.¹⁷ The third component of the training involved equipping in conflict resolution skills with the deacon and apprentice group. The fourth component of the training involved three weeks of conflict resolution case studies. The last week of the training was a time of celebration, reflection, and evaluation.

Forming Inner Circles and Developing a Church Physical Needs List (Week 8)

The first week's agenda for the new deacon and apprentice training had three agenda points. First was to give an overview of the nine weeks. Second, form inner circle accountability small groups. Third, begin planning a physical needs activity. The overview took only a short time, so we went on to forming inner circles.

In forming inner circles, the men were first asked to fill out a Personal Assessment and TALENTS Summary worksheet (see Appendix 17), which captured the essence of the previous six-week men's service training. By having their training notebooks available, the men were able to complete the worksheet to determine their status when it came to spiritual service. Next, apprentices and deacons individually compared each other's worksheets to gauge where each other's strengths and weakness complemented each other. It was thought that opposites might form the best apprentice relationships. Finally, the men discussed as a group what they believed would make up the best deacon and apprentice relationships for the 9 weeks of training. Three groups were congregated a foundation to enable believers to resolve conflict in a biblical manner (see chap. 3). The preaching series laid a common biblical standard and value system.

¹⁷Physical needs were likened to Acts 6, with deacons working as a group to meet the physical needs of the congregation in support of Great Commission ministry.

formed with each group having a deacon leader and three others (apprentice or church staff).¹⁸

Last on the agenda was the discussion of a physical needs activity. A handout with several ideas was given to the group. The deacon vice-chairman led the men through a discussion of the items on the paper and came up with several more ideas. The men picked three ideas to present to the congregation in week 9. After a very good discussion, the group closed the meeting in prayer.

Preaching Series (Weeks 9-11)

Sermon 1 – “Grow in Conflict” (Matt 18:15-17). On April 5, 2009, I preached the first sermon, entitled “Grow in Conflict” from Matthew 18:15-17. The sermon was a general summary of Matthew 18:15-17, communicating the importance of biblical conflict resolution. The introduction focused on Jesus’ blessing on peacemakers (Matt 5:9), our inability to know everything about particular conflicts, and the reality of conflicts between people in the Bible (Phil 3:17-4:2). The heart of the message concentrated on the need to grow spiritually through the conflict resolution process. Growth comes by obeying the procedures Jesus outlined in Matthew 18. The four procedures were built around the acrostic “GROW.”¹⁹ The alternative to growing through

¹⁸The chairman of the deacons had to withdraw from the training process due to his wife’s health. The oldest deacon, John, was too feeble to lead a fourth group. John was assigned to one of the groups, and the chairman and I formed our own inner circle.

¹⁹“G” stands for “Go” to the person alone. “R” stands for “Repeat” the attempt with mature witnesses. “O” stands for “Offer” to the church (elders). “W” stands for “Withdraw” fellowship.

the conflict resolution process is to accept broken relationships, which is the devil's aim in conflict. To summarize the devil's aim in conflict we used the acrostic "DIVIDE."²⁰

Sermon 2 –“First-Step Conflict Resolution” (Matt 18:15-17). On April 19, 2009, I preached the second message, entitled “First-Step Conflict Resolution” from Matthew 18:15-16. The introduction explained the context of verses 15-17 within the rest of chapter 18 (the disciples’ faulty concept of the kingdom, concern for the little ones of the kingdom, saving lost sheep, forgiving our brethren). The remainder of the message pointed out simple observations of the text for successful one-on-one conflict resolution. First, one-on-one conflict resolution from Matthew 18 concerns believers (Rom 12:18 covers relationships with nonbelievers). Second, one-on-one conflict resolution involves sin, not problems of personality, cultural clashes, socioeconomic status, or dysfunctional imaginations (sensitive dispositions, suspicions, judgmental thoughts). Third, one-on-one conflict resolution is personal. Public sins are handled differently (1 Tim 5:20). Fourth, one-on-one conflict resolution is to be done alone; the offended person goes to the offender individually, in a biblical manner, to bring about reconciliation and protect the reputations of all concerned.

Sermon 3 –“When Step 1, Going Alone, Does Not Work” (Matt 18:16-17). On April 26, 2009, I preached the third message, entitled “When Step 1, Going Alone, Does Not Work” from Matthew 18:16-17. The introduction pointed out that when going alone does not work we have 3 choices: to give up, to tell others, or to go again with help.

²⁰“D” stands for “Damaged” spirit. “I” stands for “Involve” the wrong people. “V” stands for “Violate” principles of spiritual authority. “I” stands for “I’m” the boss. “D” stands for “Defend” rebellion. “E” stands for “Engage” in deeper problems.

Next, the point was made that Jesus' exhortation to go with help relates to Deuteronomy 19:15, and that the witnesses are mature believers who are witnesses of the reconciliation process, not necessarily the offense (sin). Next the value of witnesses was explained in terms of the power of their persuasion, the benefit of their spiritual maturity, their presence communicating the seriousness of sin, and the value of protecting God's church. The message ended with a summary of Jesus' last two steps; take before the elders and remove the unrepentant offender from the entire fellowship if necessary.

Physical Needs Activity—Presentation And Planning (Week 9)

In Week 9 the deacons were to present a list of physical needs activity possibilities to the congregation in the morning worship service.²¹ The original plan was for the congregation to provide physical needs ideas, the deacons compile a priority list, then begin planning one large activity sometime after Week 12. An opportunity presented itself to conduct a spring cleaning project at the church at end of Week 9 just in time for Easter. The Easter service was planned around an evangelistic theme with a special guest, so enhancing the building appearance for guests became a large priority. The deacons decided to present both the list they compiled (for future reference) but commit to leading the spring cleaning activity. A general plan was presented to the congregation and an article placed in the bulletin. That evening, in the training, the deacons organized the Spring Cleaning activity.

The activity commenced that Thursday with carpet cleaning, flower bed rejuvenating, and rubber mulch spreading on the new playground. On Friday volunteers

²¹The prototype deacons in Acts 6 worked as a group to meet physical needs. Our deacon project would also meet needs that promoted unity in the church body.

concentrated on cleaning chairs, and a second round of carpet cleaning. Other volunteers worked clearing brush, limbs, and the removing of a tree. On Saturday the last of the carpet cleaning was completed, exterior bush was cleared, and the building was reset for Sunday. The deacons did a great job modeling sacrificial service and motivating others to work alongside them. The result was a very attractive facility that supported the evangelistic service on Easter.

Conflict Resolution Training (Weeks 10-12)

The evening deacon and apprentice training in Weeks 10-12 focused on conflict resolution training. The training was in conjunction with the three-week preaching series (Weeks 9-11). In preparation for the training the men were asked to complete two assignments: perform an on-line conflict management styles inventory (See Appendix 18) and read my rough draft of chapter 3, which was placed on the church's web site.

Group discussion was based on the chapter 3 outline. Week 10 of the large group discussion time dealt with the balance of biblical and secular resources in conflict resolution training and the general nature of conflict. Week 11 of the large group discussion time dealt with sources of conflict and levels of intervention. Week 12 of the large group discussion time dealt with conflict management styles and applying mediation. In Week 12 the on-line conflict management style inventory was discussed and applied.

**Conflict Case Studies, Physical Needs Activity, and Training Evaluation
(Weeks 13-16)**

Conflict case studies. Applying conflict resolution training was the purpose of Weeks 13-15. Conflict case studies were the means of applying the conflict resolution training that had transpired in Weeks 10-12. I gave the men three different church situations and asked the group to identify the facts, interpret the situation, and apply biblical solutions based on what they had learned from the conflict resolution training. The first case (Week 13) had to do with a former deacon of a church who had made an accusation against the remaining deacon group without any proof (see Appendix 19). The second case (Week 14) had to do with a deacon who was trying to derail a church's relocation process by going house to house and spreading lies about the senior pastor plus voicing opposition to the church's relocation plans (see Appendix 20). The third case (Week 15) had to do with a deacon being asked by a mother to intervene between a young adult man (with a ministry role) and her high school daughter who were having an inappropriate relationship (see Appendix 21). While all three situations were real, no names were used, and roles were changed to prevent any speculation.

Physical needs activity. Weeks 13-16 were also dedicated to the identification of a church need, planning, and completion of a second physical needs activity. Several ideas were examined, but the group, under the leadership of the deacon vice-chairman, settled on a "Free Car Wash." The car wash would be held on June 6, eight days before Vacation Bible School, and the purpose of the activity centered on publicity for Vacation Bible School.

On the day of the car wash 4 youth, 6 deacons and apprentices, and one other adult served. Fourteen total cars were washed. Information for Vacation Bible School was distributed to all drivers. The event seemed moderately effective in terms of numbers, but there was a lot of people in the neighborhood that noticed the event, and 6 signed up for Vacation Bible School that night on the church's web site.

Training evaluation—Week 16. The deacon project concluded Sunday evening of Week 16 with a celebration meal and training evaluation at my home. Each man brought a different item for the meal. After we ate, the men shared verbal testimonies of how God had worked in their lives during the previous fifteen weeks. The two oldest men both commented on the value of the conflict resolution training. The newest deacon realized he needed a greater grasp of scripture memory to be able to deal with conflict situations in a biblical way. One of the apprentices shared how he had been encouraged by the training to be a more spiritual leader in his home. He also realized the importance of a verbal testimony. A young married apprentice realized the importance of speaking up for Christ in work situations. A middle-aged apprentice spoke of the importance of being a personal example (model) who interacts with family, especially his wife. One apprentice stated the importance of active spiritual growth, realizing he had been saved and baptized for a long time but had only grown in the last two years. One of the two single apprentices realized the importance of applying the Word of God, with emphasis on scripture memory in order to interact with hard-to-reach people; wisdom over mere information.

Final Thoughts

During and after the deacon project, health issues with two of our deacon families had a definitive effect on the success of the deacon project. First, the chairman of the deacons was absent during the 9-week training program for deacon candidates due to his wife's illness. Though he wanted to attend, his absence had a positive effect on the growth of the vice-chairmen; it allowed him to step-up to a stronger role in the training sessions and encouraged him to express his views. Second, John Allen, a former the chairman of the deacons, and one of the greatest servants in our churches history went home to be with the Lord just after the project was completed. His support played a vital role in the success of the deacon project, and his memory serves as an example to the entire church: members, deacons, and elders.

The fruits of the sixteen-week project are being seen on several fronts. On June 14 we held a deacon day where we honored Allen's service, and activated the two deacons selected by the congregation. Mark Patterson was ordained, and David Besly was commissioned (already an ordained deacon). Deacon Day (June 14) officially ended the yearlong spiritual leadership development emphasis. Early results of spiritual renewal among the people have been reflected in higher attendance, five people saved, four persons baptized, five persons joining the church, and greater participation in Great Commission ministry by our people.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATING THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DEACON MINISTRY

Introduction

Developing a biblical deacon ministry is a vital strategy of Grace Baptist Church in obeying Christ's Great Commission. The importance of deacon ministry lies in the need to develop spiritual leadership (elders and deacons) to equip and support church ministry leadership. Ministry leadership is about engaging member-ministers in bearing spiritual fruit for eternity. Bearing spiritual fruit both glorifies the Heavenly Father (John 15:8) and allows every believer at Grace Baptist Church to realize his or her divine purposes in salvation (Rom 8:28-30; Eph 2:10). Biblical deacon ministry is therefore, ultimately about changing lives for eternity (fulfilling Christ's Great Commission).

Evaluation of Purpose

My purpose in the deacon project was to help Grace Baptist Church develop a biblical deacon ministry. The church already had an established deacon ministry rooted in biblical principles.¹ But, the existing bylaws on deacon ministry lacked a core purpose statement for deacons that guided the membership in making the best deacon selections. Additionally, some previous selections for deacon seemed to be men in the young men's

¹On pp. 6-7 of the church's 2004 Constitution and Bylaws there exists a good set of deacon procedures (qualifications, nominations, election, ordination, duties, termination, reinstatement, and activating ordained deacons from other churches).

stage of spiritual development (1 John 2:12-14). Testimonies from existing deacons indicated that in years past unqualified men had been chosen to serve. The end result was limited biblical modeling from the group as a whole and from some individuals.

The deacon project was intended to clarify and enhance the existing ministry, but more importantly, to apply biblical principles in the development of a future deacon ministry. The purpose of the deacon project was solid only as it kept the focus on the Great Commission. Spiritual leadership stayed focused on that purpose. The motivation of the membership centered on selecting new deacons based on "who they are to be" and "what they are to do." Based on survey results, the need of the membership was realized. The high caliber of the two new deacons confirms that the membership sufficiently embraced a high standard for deacon selection.

Evaluation of Goals

The deacon project had four goals. Each of the goals was designed to meet needs present in developing a biblical deacon ministry. The goals were numbered in a sequential manner aligned with the overall process. Each of the goals called for the development of action plans; the action plans corresponded to the purpose of each goal.

Goal 1—Understanding Deacon Ministry

The first goal of the deacon ministry project was to lead the church to understand deacon ministry for the purpose of deacon candidate selection. The need driving Goal 1 was for our people to be able to compare and contrast the biblical pattern of deacon ministry with other deacon models that were rooted in business and government. The desire was for our people to choose the biblical approach in the

selection of new deacons for Grace Baptist Church. The motivation was that the membership would then support the new deacon group in fulfilling their biblical purposes. Finally, the outcome of this goal was that our people would follow the examples of the deacons in fulfilling Christ's Great Commission.

The strategy to accomplish the first goal was a 3-part sermon series and two surveys with the entire congregation. The sermon series, based on chapter 2 texts, succeeded in clearly outlining the purpose, function, and qualifications of biblical deacons. The survey results indicated that the sermon series was moderately successful. The understanding level of church members was raised sufficiently to make good deacon selections. However, I did not feel that the sermon series created in our people sufficient commitment to hold to the highest standard possible—limiting deacons to men at the spiritual fathers stage (1 John 2:12-14). However, the effectiveness of the sermon series and surveys may not be realized until the new deacon group has had time to function and a need for selecting more deacons arises. The two congregational surveys helped in comparing and contrasting biblical and non-biblical approaches to deacon ministry.

Goal 2—Identifying Deacon Candidates

The second goal of the deacon project was to identify deacon candidates through a personal qualification and development process offered to all men of the church. The Men's Service Training (Weeks 1-7) was the strategy utilized to attain this goal. All willing men in the training would be equipped, but only qualified men would later be presented to the church as deacon candidates. Attendance at all training sessions was good and meetings exhibited high enthusiasm. There was a great cross section of men:

young and old, members and nonmembers, spiritually growing and spiritually mature, leaders and followers. The training consisted of inner circle groups, three weeks of personal assessments, and *TALENTS* ministry assessments.

The strategy to identify qualified men through the Men's Service Training was successful on several fronts. First, the use of question 12 of Survey 1 was a creative way to involve the congregation in the initial selection process (Acts 6:3 example). Second, the three personal assessments (Weeks 2-3) allowed most men to determine accurately whether or not they measured up to the status of a model servant.² Third, the *TALENTS* training (Weeks 4-7) helped the men assess their ministry potential.

Goal 3—Selecting Biblical Deacons

The third goal of the deacon project was to lead the church to choose a specified number of men from those who qualified from the servant training process. The selection strategy involved the entire church. Church members making the selections were informed of the process both verbally and in print (church bulletin.) Next, Pastor Beyers and I agreed on the number of deacons needed (Apostles in Acts 6 determined the number was seven). The strategy called for the existing deacons to screen men desiring to be deacons, then present qualified candidates to the congregation. Finally, the strategy empowered the congregation to select new deacons using written ballots.

The strategy to present qualified men to the congregation was weak on two fronts. First, the screening of men who wanted to be considered as deacons was not

²One young man thought he was ready to be a deacon, but later withdrew his name for consideration, realizing he was not spiritually mature enough. One of the two men who was eventually selected by the people to be a deacon, originally had no intention of serving as a deacon, but changed his mind after the three assessments.

completed on time. I failed to equip the three existing deacons with an exact plan of completion (date to start, date for completion, schedule of interviews, interview tool). The result was that we did not have names to present to the congregation in Week 7 to vote on in Week 8. Second, the existing bylaws on deacons should have been formally discussed with the congregation to create a bridge from the past to the new process under consideration. While nobody raised a question about the bylaws, I saw this as a weakness since it opened the door to potential criticism.

The strategy to present qualified men to the congregation was successful on several fronts. First, Beyers and I were precisely together in every phase of praying for a specific number of men needed for deacon selection. Both of us kept wrestling between two and three men, but when decision time was necessary we both chose two as the number. Second, the written and verbal communications (announcements and bulletins) were clear and timely (provided weeks in advance). Third, the congregation was strong in the selection of two outstanding men as deacons.

Goal 4—Training the Deacon Group

The fourth goal of the deacon project was to train the existing and new deacons to minister as a group, focusing particularly on conflict resolution skills (in the function of preserving unity in the church). The strategy to accomplish this goal had two basic components. First, the deacons would identify and select a physical need of Grace Baptist Church to address as a group. Second, the group would meet on Sunday nights and receive up to seven weeks of training on conflict resolution. While conflict resolution

skills training was addressed more from the standpoint of individuals resolving conflict, the training was in a group format.

The physical needs activity became two separate activities; one (spring cleaning) at the beginning and the other (car wash) at the end of the nine weeks. Both were effective. Prior to the deacon project the primary group functions of the deacons were counting offerings on Sundays, meeting periodically with the finance committee (annual budget formation), and serving the Lord's Supper. The addition of the two ministry events was significant and should become the first fruits of future deacon-led group ministry activities.

The conflict resolution training seemed to be very effective. It was apparent that few of the men had biblical training in conflict resolution principles. Most of the men's prior training was secular in nature or from personal experience based on success or failure. The most effective aspects of the conflict resolution training were learning the importance of unity, identifying the five conflict management styles, realizing the importance of biblical knowledge, mediating conflict, examining case studies, and coming to biblical solutions.

Strengths of the Deacon Project

Strength 1—Context

The first strength of the deacon project was the context of the project within the church's biblical vision. The primary motivation in developing a biblical deacon ministry was to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission. Jesus' exhortation that His followers should bear much fruit was the picture of success (John 15:8). The fruit-bearing tree

provided an illustration that identified deacons as a vital part of our church's success. A biblical deacon ministry was illustrated as the trunk of the tree whose roots represented the leadership of the elders, the limbs represented the ministry leadership whom deacons function with and support, and the branches, from which fruit emerges, represented the member-ministers. Developing a biblical deacon ministry represented the visible strength (modeling) of a fruit-bearing church where every member is a minister (servant). Thus, the biblical big picture is elders shepherding (lead, feed, protect), deacons modeling service, ministry leaders guiding, and members using their *TALENTS* unto the Lord.

Strength 2—Biblical Observations

The second strength of the deacon project was defining the role of deacon ministry by simple biblical observations. First, deacons are a special class of servants based on their identification in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Philippians 1:1. Thus, churches need deacons (model servants). Second, deacons are model servants based on the definitive qualifications mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and the prototype servant requirements found in Acts 6:3. Thus, the best choice of deacon should be a qualified man who measures up to spiritual fatherhood (1 John 2:12-14). Third, deacons are identified as a group (1 Tim 3 and Phil 1) with and after elders, thus their role is to function in partnership with and assistance to elder ministry. Deacons are not to reverse roles with elders (deacons leading and elders serving). Fourth, deacons do not have a biblical job description while elders do. Thus, deacons should serve very closely with elders and assist them in carrying out the elder function of shepherding God's church.³

³The many functions of elders in the Bible can be compiled under three categories: (1) ministering the word and prayer, (2) protecting God's people from evil, and (3) leading God's people to follow Christ.

Strength 3—Deacon Ministry Identification

A third strength of the deacon project was the use of a simple two-part identification for deacon ministry: who deacons are (qualifications), and what deacons do (functions). The 1 Timothy 3 passage was sufficient to answer the qualifications question. Using the requirements in Acts 6:3 for the seven prototype deacons strengthened the understanding of who deacons are. Finally, using the 1 John 2:12-14 passage identified the differences between spiritual children, young men, and fathers, and it provided a concrete case to select spiritually mature men as deacons. As to what deacons are to do, *diakonos* (servant) answers the basic question of function while Acts 6 provides categories of service (physical needs, unity-preserving, assistance in shepherding). In short deacons have high qualifications, at times performing as a group, but primarily modeling service as individuals (Stephen in Acts 6-7 and Philip in Acts 8).

Strength 4—Deacon Purpose Statement

A fourth strength of the deacon project was the formation of a deacon purpose statement. The statement was based on Acts 6:1-6: deacons are model servants who meet physical needs, preserve unity in the church, and assist elders in shepherding God's church. The statement identifies both the quality and the function of deacons. The statement both simplifies (service) and categorizes (needs meeting, unity preservation, and shepherding assistance) functions of deacon's ministry. The statement implies that elders function well at shepherding. The statement implies biblical interdependency of elders, deacons, and members. Dysfunctionalism with elders (leaders) creates confusion with deacons (servants), and opens the door to disunity among the congregation (members).

Strength 5—Project Organization

A fifth strength of the deacon project was the organization of the project process. Each element of the deacon project was designed around the goals, strategies, and action plans. Personal assessments training was tied directly to who deacons are to be. *TALENTS* training was tied directly to the ministry function of what deacons are to do as individual servants. Deacon selection in Week 8 was tied to a sequential process; candidates who completed the Men's Service Training were then screened by the existing deacons, and presented to the congregation for a vote. Deacon and apprentice training followed during Weeks 8-16, allowing the new deacon group to team up with growing disciples to start a process of developing potential deacons. Finally, the two physical needs activities and conflict resolution training aligned perfectly with two categories of deacon ministry functions; meeting physical needs and preserving unity in the church.

Weaknesses of the Deacon Project

Weakness 1—Length

The first weakness of the deacon project was the length. Even though the process was thorough and had two separate time periods (7 and 9 weeks respectively), those who completed the entire 16 weeks had a lot to absorb. Additionally, holidays affected the continuity of the 9-week period. One possibility would be to create a break between the two training periods and shorten the 9-week training period to 6 or 7 weeks.

Weakness 2—Small Groups (Weeks 8-16)

A second weakness of the deacon project was the small groups of the deacon and apprentice training (Weeks 8-16). In contrast, the small groups in Weeks 2-7 were

outstanding. Originally, the new deacon group training would have had only 5 deacons, 2 elders, and one elder-in-training. This would have created only 2 small groups consisting of spiritual leadership only (elders and deacons). When the apprentices were added, the group dynamics changed. The original idea was a smaller training group of core spiritual leadership. The new group included spiritual leadership plus apprentices. I did not do a good job of anticipating the change in dynamics and adjusting to the new opportunity. I assumed the same positive inner circle experience of the Men's Service Training would repeat in Weeks 8-16. In the end the deacon-elder-apprentice small group dynamic lacked the well-defined small group purpose that existed in Weeks 2-7.

Weakness 3—Communicating Expectations

A third weakness in the deacon project was a lack of clear communication when it came to weekly expectations of group members. I had given every member a 6-month calendar, but realized later that I had designed the training calendar with elders in mind more than the deacons, apprentices, and other participants. The calendar had too much information to absorb; it served elders well, but not the other men. The end result was that the men did not clearly understand the weekly expectations. The men needed a calendar that clearly outlined their weekly assignments for the entire 16 weeks.

Weakness 4—Follow-up

A fourth weakness in the deacon project was the lack of a follow-up plan for what would happen after the project ended. When we added apprentices to the deacon group training (Weeks 8-16) attention should have been given to the continuation of the deacon and apprentice relationship after the 16 weeks were concluded. The death of John

Allen (one of the three existing deacons) and the absence of the deacon chairman in Weeks 8-16 contributed to the challenge. This is where elders should have risen to the occasion, and we failed to do so.

A second area that lacked in follow-up was with the congregation. Several ideas for follow-up could have aided the congregation's learning process of biblical deacon ministry. First, a joint Sunday School experience during Week 3 could have been conducted after the morning worship service. At this time, the deacon survey could have been reviewed question by question to identify and explore the issues. Second, one or more Sunday School lessons could have been developed and taught in small groups. A Sunday School follow-up plan could have reinforced the biblical understanding of deacon ministry.

Theological Reflections

Reflection 1—Elder and Deacon Identification

There is confusion in God's church about spiritual leadership; the identities of elders and deacons. Much of the confusion centers on the role of elders. Some denominations have created alternate roles for the same biblical person (elder, bishop, pastor, overseer), which fans the flames of confusion. Why? Changing the identity and function of elders means changing the identity and function of deacons. In the Bible deacons are listed (identified) with and after elders. If the role of elder can be changed by men, the qualifications and responsibilities of deacon can also be changed by men (lower expectations, women deacons, etc.). Lowering the biblical standard for elders means lowering the standards for deacons. The responsibility for upholding the biblical standard

lies with church elders. The confusion begins when elders do not live up to the standard of their calling, fulfilling their biblical role, and accurately teaching God's Word concerning both biblical elders and deacons. The overall result of such confusion is a lack of spiritual modeling by all church leadership and a diminished focus on the Great Commission. The primary solution is for elders to live up to the standard of their calling and to accurately teach the roles of elders and deacons as spiritual leaders.

Reflection 2—Elder and Deacon Functions

Elders and deacons may have similar qualifications in order to model spiritual maturity, Christian living, and service in the church, but their functions are distinct and should not be reversed. As spiritual shepherds of the church, God has ordained elders to oversee God's flock. In what ways? An elder's job can be summarized first by the ministry of the Word of God and prayer, second, by protecting God's people from evil, and third, by leading the local church to follow Christ.⁴ Deacons are designed to assist with gospel purposes and to assist the elders called to shepherd (pastor) those purposes.

When it comes to the leadership function, elders are to keep the visionary purposes of God's church in the forefront (Great Commission and Great Commandments). As equippers of the saints, pastors are to keep the needs of people at heart in order to help them fulfill their God-called purposes. Finally, as overseers, elders are to administrate the support systems (buildings, budgets, programs, materials) necessary to equip the people to

⁴The shepherd's staff becomes a good illustration of these three summary functions. The shepherd uses the staff to gather the flock to feed and drink (the word and prayer). The shepherd uses the staff as a weapon against wolves and a tool to reign in stray sheep (protect God's people from evil). The shepherd uses the staff to lead the flock to new places (follow Christ). Every function of elders in the New Testament can fall under one of these three general shepherding functions.

fulfill God's visionary purposes for His church. Deacons are ideal in serving with elders in the area of support systems. But, when deacons try to lead the church, they tend to put all their focus on support systems, creating a maintenance mentality, and the vision of the church strays from the Great Commission. In this scenario elders are viewed as employees (subservient to deacon leadership) hired to support maintenance purposes (the church status quo). Could this be one reason many churches do not grow or decline? If the vision in the present is to maintain the support systems of the past, then the status quo becomes the church's vision, the Great Commission is diminished, and the result is frustration of all (elders, deacon, people).

Reflection 3—Deacons as Model Servants

The clearest way to describe a biblical deacon is a model servant. While the majority (including me) seem to believe Acts 6:1-6 describes the prototype deacon group, there are other views. The qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 are clear enough to identify deacons as models of ministry (service), Christian living, and maturity (spiritual growth). Whether or not biblical interpreters accept Acts 6 as the first deacon group, the standard for deacon selection should remain the highest possible. Companion texts such as 1 John 2:12-14 identify the highest spiritual maturity level deacons should model.

The best source for defining the basic function of a model servant is Acts 6:1-6 (meeting physical needs, preserving unity, assisting elders in shepherding). The prototype deacons (Acts 6) gave clues as to how deacons functioned as a group and as individuals (Acts 6-8). When spiritual leadership functions well, biblical deacons immensely bless the church as models of ministry, Christian living, and spiritual maturity.

Personal Reflections

Perhaps the main obstacle to a biblical deacon ministry is ineffective elders.

Personally, I (as an elder) enjoy doing deacon-oriented ministry. Meeting physical needs allows me to see the results of ministry immediately. Preserving unity has tremendous emotional satisfaction. Performing shepherding functions in a support manner pleases the congregation, especially if they have that expectation of the "Preacher." Based on spiritual gifts, I likely have the gift of service, so doing "deacon work" comes naturally. As a servant of the Lord this is not a problem if the service is patterned after that of the Apostle Paul who was willing to work as a tent maker to support his Great Commission work (Acts 18; 1 Cor 9). However, when the church needs its elders to cast vision, equip people, and lead out in the development of up-to-date support systems, then doing satisfying deacon work becomes a hindrance to the church bearing spiritual fruit for eternity.

The challenge for me is to be a biblical elder who partners with other elders to develop a fruit-bearing church for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. I need to equip qualified men as deacons, to model spiritual service that supports ministry leaders, who will guide ministries, that engage member-ministers to bear spiritual fruit for eternity. As an elder I must be wise and realize that the world, the flesh, and the devil will do all they can to sabotage a fruit-bearing church (through deceptions such as: deacons leading, elders serving, ministry leaders supporting, members watching). I have had successes and failures in ministry. My desire is to apply those experiences from the past in order to realize a Christ-honoring future.

Implications for Further Study

Young Pastors in Deacon-Controlled Churches

One implication for further study is the situation of young pastors in deacon-controlled churches. An example is when a small church hires an inexperienced man as pastor; ordained, able to preach, but limited in leadership skills. The deacons, who control the church, may carry an attitude, "we were here before you (the young pastor) arrived, and will be here long after you leave." The first question that should be asked is whether the young pastor was ordained too quickly. Timothy was young but he was discipled by the Apostle Paul and anointed to serve as an elder. Paul served for years before he was commissioned for missionary service in Acts 13. If young pastors are ordained too quickly or inappropriately and placed in leadership without discipling, then they may have little influence with long-term deacons controlling the church. I believe the need is for elder development more than fighting deacon-controlled churches.

Deacons Who Should Be Elders

Another implication for further study is the possibility that some deacons should be elders. All deacons must hold to the mystery of the faith; be able to apply knowledge of God's Word in times of physical need, unity building, and assisting elders. Elders minister the Word of God. Are some deacons really elders in deacons' clothing? Are some God-called elders holding deacon positions because they do not feel called to full time church ministry? If we maintain that all elders are professional clergy, then elder leadership becomes a part or full time career. While point elders (such as James in Jerusalem) seemed to have functioned full-time, we know little about how the other New

Testament elders functioned beyond their teaching and leadership responsibilities. But, elders are always mentioned functioning in a plurality. In our small church Pastor Beyers works full time at Lockheed Martin as a missile designer and serves our church as an ordained, volunteer (non-paid) elder. Our part-time music leader is an elder-in-training, but will not be ordained until he meets all the qualifications. I have one deacon with a teaching gift who potentially is a future elder. Are there other deacons with an elder's calling, not designed by God to be professional clergy (moving from church to church), but to be long-term shepherds for local congregations? If so, could this be one of the sources of friction between pastors and deacons in some churches?

Women Deacons

One other implication for further study is the question of women deacons. Interpreters have struggled with the implication of Phoebe in Romans 16:1 and the women of 1 Timothy 3:11. Catholics have created the order of nuns, and various denominations have added women as deacons to serve alongside men. First, the deacons described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 were clearly men, for how can a woman righteously be the husband of one wife? Though Phoebe was most certainly a special servant there is no solid reason to conclude she served in a men's order. Historical research on women as deacons seems to indicate that there was a separate order of women (deaconesses). Under the supervision of elders or a male deacon group, the women's group most likely ministered to women, children, and the poor.⁵ What needs exist today that could benefit from such an order? If this women's order really existed and is needed today, then biblical texts that need to be

⁵Brian M. Schwertley, *A Historical and Biblical Examination of Women Deacons*, 1998 [on-line]; accessed 24 July 2008; available from <http://www.all-of-grace.org/pub/schwertley/deacon.html>; Internet.

explored for the proper emergence of a women's deacon group are 1 Timothy 3:11; 5:3-16; and Romans 16:1. If such an order is legitimate it would be dependent on the existence of healthy elder and deacon ministries in the local church.

Conclusion

Developing a biblical deacon ministry is a worthy, Christ-honoring goal. Deacons are vital to building a church filled with people who live by the Great Commandments to obey Christ's Great Commission. Because of poorly-selected deacons and bad experiences in the past, some churches with strong elder leadership have bypassed or done away with deacon ministry altogether. These churches may have functioning model servants without identification as deacons. These servants carry influence, but without being recognized as deacons (models of spiritual maturity, Christian living, and ministry), their individual and group ministry impact is limited. Elders may be forced to carry loads God never intended them to carry. Will these elders burn out under such a load? Will lay ministry leaders suffer without a deacon group after whom they can model their lives and ministries? Will disunity overcome the church because there is not a group trained to perform biblical conflict resolution in the church body? Because the Bible identifies the ministry of deacons, it seems best for every church to pursue building and supporting a deacon group in the manner prescribed by the Scriptures; model servants who meet physical needs, preserve unity in the church, and assist elders in shepherding God's church.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY #1 (WEEK #1) ~ CONGREGATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF WHO ARE DEACONS? WHAT ARE THEY TO DO?"

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the level of our church's understanding of who deacons are and what deacons are to do. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will take a two-page survey today and another survey two weeks from today. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Instructions: *This is an anonymous survey on deacons and deacon ministry. Please answer each question fully so that we have an accurate reflection of the understanding and attitudes of the people of Grace Baptist Church, Arlington, TX*

Participant Information

Your gender: Male Female

Your age group: Young Adult Median Adult Senior Adult

Years in church 1- 5 6-10 11-20 21+

Church status: I am a church member I attend regularly I am a guest

Survey Questions

1. In a word, deacon is best defined as (check one):

Leader Servant Administrator Protector

2. The Bible's emphasis on deacons is (check one):

who they are what they do where they serve why they serve

3. Deacons, as a group, should meet (check one):

weekly monthly quarterly when there's a need

4. The primary function of a deacon group is (check one):

administrate the Church provide a "check and balance" for the pastor(s)
 lead a family care network none of the above

5. Churches should have a deacon group: Yes No Not Sure

6. Deacons differ from elders (pastors) in what way? (check one):

Deacons do not have a job description but elders do.
 Deacons have the final decision on what elders suggest.
 Deacons do not preach while elders do preach.
 Deacons primarily support the ministry Elders perform.

7. Which statement is not true concerning deacons and elders (check one):

- Deacons are model servants with no job description.
- Deacons can be men or women.
- Deacons have high qualifications in the Bible.
- Elders (pastors) are spiritually qualified men with a biblical job description.

8. Which of these two is the most important (check one)

- Deacons ministering as individuals
- Deacons ministering as a group

9. Which statement least describes a deacon's biblical function? (check one):

- Deacons meet physical needs.
- Deacons preserve unity in the church.
- Deacons determine the church's direction.
- Deacons support elders (pastors) in shepherding the church.

10. Below are 8 qualifications for deacons taken from 1 Timothy 3:8-12. All 8 of these are essential. In order to show which qualification means most to you when selecting a deacon, rank the list below from 1 to 8 with "1" being the most important, and "8" being the least important to you. *There should be a different number on every selection.*

Text quote (NKJ)	Qualification Summary	Qualification Description	Your Ranking
<i>Men of dignity</i>	Respectable	upstanding; blameless	
<i>Not double-tongued</i>	Genuine	not a hypocrite or faking it; genuine Christian	
<i>Not addicted to much wine</i>	Sober	doesn't depend on alcohol to handle life	
<i>Not fond of sordid gain</i>	Honest with money	money is his servant, not his master	
<i>Holding to the mystery of the faith</i>	Sincere believer	they know what they believe and live by it	
<i>Let these also first be tested</i>	Proven	church member who has been seen in action over time	
<i>Husbands of one wife</i>	Faithful husband	one-woman-man; devoted to his marriage	
<i>Good managers of their children and their own households</i>	Home leader	trains his children in the ways of the Lord; he's the spiritual leader of his home	

11. What do you believe is the minimal level of spiritual maturity for a deacon? (check one)

- Young, excited believer
- Growing believer who serves the Lord and people
- Mature believer who models spirit-filled service

12. When the training for men begins next Sunday, I would like to see the following five men participate in the training:

① _____

② _____

③ _____

④ _____

⑤ _____

APPENDIX 2

SURVEY 1 (WEEK 1) RESULTS: CONGREGATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF "WHO ARE DEACONS? WHAT ARE THEY TO DO?"

Table A1. Participant Information—gender and age group

Gender	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Males	7	12	6	25	44
Females	9	11	12	32	56
TOTAL	16	23	18	57	100

Table A2. Participant Information—lifetime years in church

	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
1-5 Years	2	2	0	4	7
6-10 Years	1	2	0	3	6
11-20 Years	4	2	0	6	11
20+ Years	8	16	18	42	76
TOTAL	15	22	18	55	100

Table A3. Participant Information—Grace Baptist Church status

	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
I am a member	13	16	16	45	82
I attend regularly	3	5	0	8	15
I am a guest	0	2	0	2	3
TOTAL	16	23	16	55	100

Table A4. Question 1—In a word, deacon is best defined as (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Leader	3	2	8	13	23
Servant	13	19	10	42	74
Administrator	0	2	0	2	3
Protector	0	0	0	0	0
Total	16	23	18	57	100

Note: Young and Median adults understand best the nature of deacons as servants. Senior adults are almost split between deacons as servants and leaders of the church. No age group was confused by the idea that deacons are administrators or protectors.

Table A5. Question 2—The Bible's emphasis on deacons is (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Who they are	3	8	2	13	25
What they do	7	6	6	19	36
Where they serve	0	1	1	2	4
Why they serve	4	6	8	18	35
Total	14	21	17	52	100

Note: Only 25 percent realize the Bible's emphasis on deacons in terms of character. 71 percent associate the Bible's emphasis on deacons by activity (who they are and why they serve)

Table A6. Question 3—Deacons, as a group, should meet (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Weekly	5	5	3	13	23
Monthly	4	5	4	13	23
Quarterly	0	1	1	2	3
When there's a need	7	12	10	29	51
Total	16	23	18	57	100

Note: Half of respondents recognized that needs are the basis for deacons meetings. Half of respondents felt that deacons should have some sort of formal schedule to meet as a group. This question focused on deacons functioning as a group.

Table A7. Question 4—The primary function of a deacon group is (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Administrate the church	4	5	6	15	27
Provide a "check and balance" for the pastors	1	1	3	5	9
Lead a family care network	5	5	7	17	31
None of the above	5	11	2	18	33
Total	15	22	18	55	100

Note: All 3 deacons answered "none of the above." Twenty-seven percent chose "administrate the church," but in question 1 only 3 percent identified deacons this way.

Table A8. Question 5—Churches should have a deacon group (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Yes	15	21	16	52	93
No	0	0	1	1	2
Not Sure	0	2	1	3	5
Total	15	23	18	56	100

Note: This church has a high view of the need of a deacon ministry group

Table A9. Question 6—Deacons differ from elders (pastors) in what way? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Deacons do not have a job description but elders do	3	5	1	9	16
Deacons have the final decision on what elders suggest	0	1	3	4	7
Deacons do not preach while elders to preach	2	6	4	12	22
Deacons primarily support ministry Elders perform	11	10	9	30	55
Total	16	22	17	55	100

Note: 2 of the 3 deacons selected the first option and the other selected the last option. Over half of our people see deacons in a support role to the elders. Only 16 percent knew there was no biblical job description for deacons.

Table A10. Question 7—Which statement is not true concerning deacons and elders? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
<u>Deacons are model servants with no job description</u>	1	4	1	6	11
<u>Deacons can be men or women</u>	15	19	12	46	82
<u>Deacons have high qualifications in the Bible</u>	0	0	3	3	5
<u>Elders (pastors) are spiritually qualified men with a biblical job description</u>	0	0	1	1	2
Total	16	23	17	56	100

Note: This question was designed to teach or reinforce 3 truths more than find the one answer that was false. This question was a good follow-up to question 6, especially concerning biblical job descriptions. The older the adult, the more confusion there was about women deacons. Still, 82 percent got this question right.

Table A11. Question 8—Which of these two is the most important? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
<u>Deacons ministering as individuals</u>	4	16	8	28	50
<u>Deacons ministering as a group</u>	11	7	10	28	50
Total	15	23	18	56	100

Note: This was more of an opinion question since deacons function in both capacities. It is interesting how young and median adults were the opposite while seniors were more evenly divided. Still the overall result was an exact split.

Table A12. Question 9—Which statement least describes a deacon's biblical function? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Deacons meet physical needs	5	7	7	19	35
Deacons preserve unity in the church	1	1	0	2	4
Deacons determine the church's direction	9	13	4	26	47
Deacons support Elders (pastors) in shepherding the church	0	2	6	8	14
Total	15	23	17	55	100

Note: Half know deacons don't set the church's direction.

Table A13. Question 11 —What do you believe is the minimal level of spiritual maturity for a deacon? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Young, excited believer	0	2	0	2	4
Growing believer who serves the Lord and people	7	10	9	26	47
Mature believer who models spirit-filled service	8	11	8	27	49
Total	15	23	17	55	100

Note: Almost half are willing to allow someone in the middle stages of spiritual development take on the role of a model servant. Is this maintaining a lower standard? Is it confusion?

Table A14. Question 10—Below are 8 qualifications for deacons taken from 1 Timothy 3:8-12. All 8 of these are essential. In order to show which qualification means most to you when selecting a deacon, rank the list below from 1 to 8 with "1" being the most important, and "8" being the least important to you. *There should be a different number on every selection.*

Text quote (NKJ)	Qualification Summary	Qualification Description	Responses	Score	Rank
Men of dignity	Respectable	upstanding; blameless	48	250	2
Not double tongued	Genuine	not a hypocrite or faking it; genuine Christian	48	233	4
Not addicted to much wine	Sober	doesn't depend on alcohol to handle life	45	126	7
Not fond of sordid gain	Honest with money	money is his servant, not his master	49	122	8
Holding to the mystery of the faith	Sincere believer	they know what they believe and live by it	47	312	1
Let these also first be tested	Proven	church member who has been seen in action over time	48	195	5
Husbands of one wife	Faithful husband	one-woman-man; devoted to his marriage	47	236	3
Good managers of their children and their own households	Home leader	trains his children in the ways of the Lord; he's the spiritual leader of his home	43	179	6

Note: Average number of responses was 47 out of 57 possible (82 percent) which means 18 percent chose not to answer this question.

APPENDIX 3

STAGES OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY ~ 1 JOHN 2:12-14 REFUEL ~ MARCH 4, 2009

- ◆ How old will I be when I go to heaven (physically and spiritually)?

Descriptions ↓		STAGE #1 <i>Children</i> ↓			STAGE #2 <i>Young Men</i> ↓			STAGE #3 <i>Fathers</i> ↓		
Maturity Level ⇒	<i>Dependence</i>	<i>Independence</i>			<i>Interdependence</i>					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spiritual Status ⇒	<i>Redeemed</i>			<i>Resolved</i>			<i>Respected</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
State of Heart ⇒	<i>"Forgiven" of sin-guiltiness</i>			<i>"Victory" over world, flesh, devil</i>			<i>"Intimacy" with Christ</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Relational Word ⇒	<i>YOU</i>			<i>I</i>			<i>US</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Motivation ⇒	<i>Security</i>			<i>Success</i>			<i>Significance</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Word of God ⇒	<i>Must be fed</i>			<i>Able to feed Self</i>			<i>Willing and able to feed others</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
General Needs ⇒	<i>Encouragement Education, Care Correction</i>			<i>Empowering & Equipping for ministry and mission</i>			<i>To know God and make God known by word & deed</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Participation Level ⇒	<i>Comers</i>			<i>Committed</i>			<i>Core</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Commitment Level ⇒	<i>Decider</i>			<i>Disciple</i>			<i>Discipler</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

APPENDIX 4

SURVEY 2 (WEEK 3) ~ CONGREGATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF "WHO ARE DEACONS? WHAT ARE THEY TO DO?"

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the level of our church's understanding of who deacons are and what deacons are to do. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop males servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will take a two-page survey today and another survey two weeks from today. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Instructions: *This is a second, anonymous survey on deacons and deacon ministry. Please answer each question fully so that we have an accurate reflection of the understanding and attitudes of the people of Grace Baptist Church, Arlington, TX.*

Participant Information

Your gender: Male Female

Your age group: Young Adult Median Adult Senior Adult

Years in church 1-5 6-10 11-20 21+

Church status: I am a church member I attend regularly I am a guest

Survey Information: I took the first deacon survey I did not take the first survey

Survey Questions

1. In a word, deacon is best defined as (check one):

Leader Servant Administrator Protector

2. The Bible's emphasis on deacons is (check one):

who they are what they do where they serve why they serve

3. Deacons, as a group, should meet (check one):

Weekly Monthly Quarterly When there's a need

4. The primary function of a deacon group is (check one):

administrate the Church provide a "check and balance" for the pastor(s)
 lead a family care network none of the above

5. Churches should have a deacon group: Yes No Not Sure

6. Deacons differ from elders (pastors) in what way? (check one):

- Deacons do not have a job description but elders do.
- Deacons have the final decision on what elders suggest.
- Deacons do not preach while elders do preach.
- Deacons primarily support the ministry Elders perform.

7. Which statement is not true concerning deacons and elders (check one):

- Deacons are model servants with no job description.
- Deacons can be men or women
- Deacons have high qualifications in the Bible
- Elders (pastors) are spiritually qualified men with a biblical job description.

8. Which of these two is the most important? (check one)

- Deacons ministering as individuals
- Deacons ministering as a group

9. Which statement least describes a deacon's biblical function? (check one):

- Deacons meet physical needs.
- Deacons preserve unity in the church.
- Deacons determine the church's direction.
- Deacons support elders (pastors) in shepherding the church.

10. Below are 8 qualifications for deacons taken from 1 Timothy 3:8-12. All 8 of these are essential. In order to show which qualification means most to you when selecting a deacon, rank the list below from 1 to 8 with "1" being the most important, and "8" being the least important to you. There should be a different number on every selection.

Text quote (NKJ)	Qualification Summary	Qualification Description	Your Ranking
<i>Men of dignity</i>	Respectable	upstanding; blameless	
<i>Not double-tongued</i>	Genuine	not a hypocrite or faking it; genuine Christian	
<i>Not addicted to much wine</i>	Sober	doesn't depend on alcohol to handle life	
<i>Not fond of sordid gain</i>	Honest with money	money is his servant, not his master	
<i>Holding to the mystery of the faith</i>	Sincere believer	they know what they believe and live by it	
<i>Let these also first be tested</i>	Proven	church member who has been seen in action over time	
<i>Husbands of one wife</i>	Faithful husband	one-woman-man; devoted to his marriage	
<i>Good managers of their children and their own households</i>	Home leader	trains his children in the ways of the Lord; he's the spiritual leader of his home	

11. What do you believe is the minimal level of spiritual maturity for a deacon? (check one)

- Young, excited believer
- Growing believer who serves the Lord and people
- Mature believer who models spirit-filled service

12. (To be answered by those who took the first survey) What I have learned most from the

sermon series on deacons and deacon ministry is: _____

APPENDIX 5

SURVEY 2 (WEEK 3) RESULTS: CONGREGATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF WHO ARE DEACONS? WHAT ARE THEY TO DO?

Table A15. Participant Information—gender and age group

Gender	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Males	8	9	5	22	42
Females	9	9	12	30	58
TOTAL	17	18	17	52	100

Table A16. Participant Information—lifetime years in church

	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
1-5 Years	2	0	0	2	7
6-10 Years	1	3	1	5	6
11-20 Years	4	2	0	6	11
20+ Years	10	13	16	39	76
TOTAL	17	18	17	52	100

Table A17. Participant Information—Grace Baptist Church status

	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
I am a member	15	13	17	45	82
I attend regularly	1	2	0	3	15
I am a guest	1	3	0	4	3
TOTAL	17	18	17	52	100

Table A18. Participant Information—Take the first survey?

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Yes	15	8	13	36	
No	2	10	3	15	
Total	17	18	16	51	100

Table A19. Question 1—In a word, deacon is best defined as (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Leader	0	3	2	5	10
Servant	17	14	15	46	88
Administrator	0	0	0	0	0
Protector	0	1	0	1	2
Total	17	18	17	52	100

Note: Young adults recognized deacons as servants 100% in this survey (81% previously). Median adults decreased in identifying deacons as servants (from 83 to 77 percent). Seniors went from 56% to 88% in identifying deacons as servants. Overall the increase from Survey 1 to Survey 2 was 14%

Table A20. Question 2—The Bible's emphasis on deacons is (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Who they are	10	10	7	27	55
What they do	2	5	3	10	20
Where they serve	0	0	3	3	6
Why they serve	4	3	2	9	18
Total	16	18	15	49	100

Note: On "Who they are," young adults went from 21% to 63% (+42%). On "Who they are," median adults went from 38% to 55% (+17%). On "Who they are," senior adults went from 12% to 47% (+35%). Overall the increase from Survey 1 to Survey 2 was 30% (25% to 55%).

Table A21. Question 3—Deacons, as a group, should meet (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Weekly	3	5	3	11	21
Monthly	4	3	3	10	19
Quarterly	0	0	1	1	2
When there's a need	10	10	10	30	58
Total	17	18	17	52	100

Note: On deacons meetings based on needs young adults went from 44% to 59% (+15%). On deacons meetings based on needs median adults went from 52% to 55% (+3%). On deacons meetings based on needs senior adults went from 55% to 59% (+4%). Overall the increase from Survey 1 to Survey 2 was 7% (51% to 58%).

Table A22. Question 4—The primary function of a deacon group is (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Administristrate the church	1	4	8	13	25
Provide a "check and balance" for the pastors	3	4	5	12	24
Lead a family care network	3	1	1	5	10
None of the above	10	8	3	21	41
Total	17	17	17	51	100

Note: On "none of the above" young adults went from 33% to 59% (+26%). On "none of the above" median adults went from 50% to 47% (-3%). 6 of 10 who did not take Survey 1 missed this question. 5 of 7 (71%) who did take Survey 1 got it right. On "none of the above" senior adults went from 11% to 18% (+4%). Overall the increase from Survey 1 to Survey 2 was 8% (33% to 41%).

Table A23. Question 5—Churches should have a deacon group (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Yes	15	18	17	50	94
No	0	0	0	0	0
Not Sure	2	0	1	3	6
Total	17	18	18	53	100

Note: Virtually no change between Survey 1 and Survey 2 (1% higher).

Table A24. Question 6—Deacons differ from elders (pastors) in what way? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Deacons do not have a job description but elders do	12	8	8	28	55
Deacons have the final decision on what elders suggest	0	2	1	3	6
Deacons do not preach while elders to preach	0	2	0	2	4
Deacons primarily support ministry Elders perform	5	6	7	18	35
Total	17	18	16	51	100

Note: On "deacons not having job descriptions" young adults went from 19% to 71% (+52%). On "deacons not having job descriptions" median adults went from 23% to 44% (+21%). On "deacons not having job descriptions" senior adults went from 6% to 50% (+44%). Overall the increase from Survey 1 to Survey 2 was 39% (16% to 55%)

Table A25. Question 7—Which statement in not true concerning deacons and elders? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Deacons are model servants with no job description	1	4	5	10	20
Deacons can be men or women	14	12	10	36	72
Deacons have high qualifications in the Bible	0	2	2	4	8
Elders (pastors) are spiritually qualified men with a biblical job description	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15	18	17	50	100

Note: In this survey there was a decrease of 10% of those saying women can be deacons (82% to 72%). Of the ones who did not take Survey 1, 5 of 10 median adults, and 2 of 3 seniors missed this question (7 out of 13 or 54%). One of the two young adults did not answer the question and the other got it right. 14 of the 50 respondents missed this question, and 7 of them did not take Survey 1.

Table A26. Question 8—Which of these two is the most important? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Deacons ministering as individuals	10	10	13	33	62
Deacons ministering as a group	7	8	5	20	38
Total	17	18	18	53	100

Note: The last survey was a 50 / 50 split. 12% more in Survey 2 chose individual ministry as more important.

Table A27. Question 9—Which statement least describes a deacon's biblical function? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Deacons meet physical needs	3	4	3	10	20
Deacons preserve unity in the church	0	0	2	2	4
Deacons determine the church's direction	13	9	4	26	53
Deacons support Elders (pastors) in shepherding the church	0	4	7	11	23
Total	16	17	16	49	100

Note. Belief that deacons don't set the direction rose from 47% to 53% (minimal increase). Young adults rose 21%, median adults fell by 4%, and seniors fell 2%. Deacons supporting elders rose from 14% to 23% overall. 6 of 10 median adults, and 3 of 3 seniors, and 1 young adult who did not take Survey #1 missed this question (10 of 14 total or 71%). Of all those who did take Survey #1 the results are 63% got it right (16% increase)

Table A28. Question 10 –Below are 8 qualifications for deacons taken from 1 Timothy 3:8-12. All 8 of these are essential. In order to show which qualification means most to you when selecting a deacon, rank the list below from 1 to 8 with "1" being the most important, and "8" being the least important to you. *There should be a different number on every selection.*

Text quote (NKJ)	Qualification Summary	Qualification Description	Responses	Score	Rank
Men of dignity	Respectable	upstanding; blameless	40	241	1
Not double tongued	Genuine	not a hypocrite or faking it; genuine Christian	35	198	3
Not addicted to much wine	Sober	doesn't depend on alcohol to handle life	40	117	7
Not fond of sordid gain	Honest with money	money is his servant, not his master	35	115	8
Holding to the mystery of the faith	Sincere believer	they know what they believe and live by it	35	221	2
Let these also first be tested	Proven	church member who has been seen in action over time	37	168	4
Husbands of one wife	Faithful husband	one-woman-man; devoted to his marriage	35	148	5
Good managers of their children and their own households	Home leader	trains his children in the ways of the Lord; he's the spiritual leader of his home	34	143	6

Note: Average number of responses was 36 out of 52 possible, which means the average was 31% who did not answer question 10. Comparison of Surveys 1 & 2: "Dignity" (2/1), "Double tongue" (4/3), "Wine" (7/7), "Sordid gain" (8/8), "Mystery of faith" (1/2), "Tested" (5/4), "One wife" (3/5), "Managers" (6/6). Scores were tallied by assigning 8 points to the first selection, 7 points to selection 2, 6 points to selection 3, 5 points to selection 4, 4 points to selection 5, 3 points to selection 6, 2 points to selection 7, and 1 point to selection 8.

Table A29. Question 11 –What do you believe is the minimal level of spiritual maturity for a deacon? (check one)

Options	Young Adults	Median Adults	Senior Adults	Total	%
Young, excited believer	0	1	1	2	4
Growing believer who serves the Lord and people	9	9	5	23	45
Mature believer who models spirit-filled service	8	8	10	26	51
Total	17	18	16	51	100

Note: On "mature believer" young adults went from 53% to 47% (-6%). On "mature believer" median adults went from 48% to 44% (-4%). On "mature believer" senior adults went from 47% to 63% (+16%). Overall the increase from Survey 1 to Survey 2 was 2% (49% to 51%)

Table A30. Question 12 –What I learned most from the sermon series on deacons and deacon ministry

Various Answers Given (Total)	Young Adults		Median Adults		Senior Adults	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Qualifications (7)	1	1	1	2	1	1
Deacons are Servants (1)			1			
Deacons are Models (2)	1				1	
Deacon's Purpose / Mission (2)	1					1
No job description for a deacon (3)	1				1	1
Good study (1)	1					
I do not agree in all areas (1)	1					
Husband of one wife (1)			1			
Meeting Physical Needs (1)					1	
Knowing how to select a deacon (1)					1	
"Who they are" (1)					1	
"How they serve" / "What they do" (2)					1	1
TOTAL	6	3	4	4	3	3

APPENDIX 6

SIX MONTH PLANNING AND PRAYER CALENDAR

- Below is a 6-month planning & prayer calendar for the benefit of Grace Baptist Church leadership
- Planning dates were set to coincide with Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project, *The Process of Developing a Biblical Deacon Ministry*
- The start date of February 8 was set to meet the academic requirements of the Billy Graham School of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Date	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Other
Jan 4	Matt. 5:27-30 (adultery)	<i>Fruits of the Spirit</i>	
Jan 11	Matt. 5:31-32 (divorce)	<i>Anointing & Empowering of the Spirit</i>	
Jan 18	Matt. 5:33-37 (oaths)	<i>6 Sins Against the Holy Spirit</i>	
Jan 25	Matt. 5:38-42 (nonresistance)	<i>Spirit Life</i>	Playground Rebuilding Begins
Feb. 1	Matt. 5:43-48 (love)	<i>Super Bowl Outreach Party</i>	
Feb. 8	♦W1: Acts 6:1-6	♦W1: Men's Fellowship-Orientation	Women's Ministry with Paula Beyer & Children Emphasis (PM)
Feb. 15	♦W2: 1 John 2:12-14	*MST: W2 ~ Groups & PAF #1	
Feb. 22	♦W3: 1 Timothy 3:8-13	*MST: W3~ PAF #2 & #3	
Mar 1	Matt. 6:1-4 (almsgiving)	*MST: W4 ~ Spiritual Gifts	↓
Mar 8	Matt. 6:5-8 (prayer)	*MST: W5 ~ Temperaments	↓
Mar 15	Matt. 6:9-15 (model prayer)	*MST: W6 ~ Ambitions, Needs, & Leadership Style	↓
Mar 22	Matt. 6:16-18 (fasting)	*MST: W7 ~ Abilities & Experiences + Training Evaluation	↓
Mar 29	Philip Beyer Preach Deacon Selection Vote	*W8 ~ New Deacon Group (NDG) Training (Physical Needs List)	PM Service Series By Scott Livingston
April 5	Matthew 18:15-17A	NDG: W9 ~ Conflict Training #1	↓
April 12	EASTER SERVICE	No Deacon Training	No PM Service
April 19	Matthew 18:15-17B	NDG: W10 ~ Conflict Training #2	↓
April 26	Matthew 18:15-17C	NDG: W11 ~ Conflict Training #3	↓
May 3	Matt. 6:19-20 (Right Bank)	NDG: W12 ~ Conflict Evaluation & Physical Needs Project Planning	↓
May 10	Matt. 6:21-24 (Right Investments)	NDG: W13 ~ Situation Exercise 1	↓
May 17	Matt 6:25-30 (Right Social Security)	NDG: W14 ~ Situation Exercise 2	↓
May 24	Matt 6:31-34 (Right savings)	NDG: W15 ~ Situation Exercise 3	↓
May 31	Matt 7:1-6 (judging)	NDG: W16 ~ Project Evaluation	↓
June 7	Matt 7:7-11 (provision)	Last Session of Eternal Impact →	↓
June 14	New Deacon Group Commissioning & Luncheon	No PM Service ~ VBS Setup	
June 21	Matt 7:12 (golden rule)	<i>What about women deacons?</i>	
June 28	Matt 7:13-14 (narrow gate)	TBD	

♦W = Week

*MST = Men's Servant Training

PAF = Personal Assessment Form

Men's Service Training Summary

● Who can Participate?

- Church Members ~ these will receive the most benefit
- Sunday School members ~ these will be benefit but are limited by what they can do with the training
- Teen males ~ they an "audit" the process with parental permission, but will not be included in any research results due to seminary guidelines
- Guests ~ because this is a church emphasis, guest participation must be screened case by case

● Why is the training being offered?

- To fulfill Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)
- To equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12) leading to the spiritual growth of each man, the unity of the church, and the building up of the body of Christ (verses 13-16)
- To discover those who are candidates to become deacons March 29th
- To discover potential deacon candidates for the future

● What is the training?

- Inner Circles ~ basic spiritual accountability within small groups of other men (daily reading the Word of God & prayer)
- Personal Assessments ~ personal evaluations from the scriptures preached February 8, 15, 22.
- TALENTS ~ discovery God's ministry design and how to apply discoveries

● When is the training?

- Small Groups ~ start time is 6:00 p.m. Each small group can start earlier if they desire.
- Group Training ~ start time is 6:15 p.m. sharp and conclude sometime after 7:00
- Dates ~ training is from February 8-March 22

● Where will the training take place?

- Location for the men's group will depend on which group most needs the meeting room (men or women)
- Other alternatives will be explored

● How will the training be conducted?

- Inner circles will focus men on their relationship with God and one another
- Personal assessments will focus men on "who they are."
- TALENTS will focus men on "what they do."
- Take home assignments will focus men on individual discovery and application under the Lordship of Jesus Christ
- Reports will be utilized to assess the effectiveness of the 7 weeks and individual advancements

APPENDIX 7

WEEKS 2-7: MEN'S SERVANT TRAINING ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to encourage and exhort men in their spiritual walk with God and one another. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will partner with two or more men to form spiritual growth accountability groups. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your participation in this group, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Overview

Over the next seven weeks you will team up with two or more men in a spiritual growth accountability small group. The accountability of the group is based on daily reading of God's word, daily prayer, and any personal needs you feel comfortable sharing within your small group. Personal needs shared within your small group, *stay within your small group.*

Reports

The next page contains a sample of a weekly report your leader will turn in each week. The report indicates the number of days in the week each team member spent time with God reading the Bible and praying. The report will also summarize needs shared within the group, without giving details (e.g. 3 family needs, 2 work needs, one individual needs shared). No names or specific needs will be reported to pastor Jimmy or anyone else concerning accountability issues.

Scriptural Basis

- ✓ **Man to Man:** *Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another* (Proverbs 27:17)
- ✓ **Inner Circle:** *Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves* (Matthew 17:1)
- ✓ **Leader with Group:** *And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach* (Mark 3:14)

Goals of the Accountability Small Groups

1. Individual fellowship with God on a daily basis
2. Develop basic trust / fellowship with other men
3. Encourage future small group inner circles
4. Encourage service to the Lord Jesus Christ through His local church
5. Glorify God and do good to others

Instructions

1. Each member is encouraged to read one or more chapters of the Bible each day.
2. Each member is encouraged to pray daily; acknowledging God's presence, confessing any known sin (1 John 1:9), giving of thanks (Ephesians 5:), and interceding for needs (yours, family's, team members', church, lost people, work, etc.)
3. Each member is encouraged to be in contact with their team members during the week to check on their spiritual growth, pray for one another, and generally share life together.
4. Each member will meet with your groups at or before 6:00 p.m., Sunday nights. Be prepared to share the number of days you read God's Word and prayed, plus any needs you feel are appropriate to share during your time.
5. Each member will participate in the large group training starting at 6:15 sharp.

Accountability Groups' Report Form: Men's Servant Training Grace Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas

Team Leader:

Date:

Member ↓	# of days Reading God's Word & Praying ↓	Prayer Summary ↓
#1		
#2		
#3		
#4		
TOTAL ⇒		
Other Comments ⇒		

APPENDIX 8

MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING GROUP ATTENDANCE GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, ARLINGTON, TX

Name	*	Yes	No	?	2/15	2/22	3/1	3/8	3/15	3/22	Comments
John	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	
David	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	
Philip	↔	1					↔	↔	↔	↔	Sick on 2-15 Wife sick 2-22
Johnny	↔	1			↔	↔	↔		↔	↔	♦ Sick on 3-8
Ryan	↔	1			↔	↔		↔	↔	↔	Conflict on 3-1
Allen	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	Needs Spiritual Gifts
James							↔				<i>Did not complete the process</i>
Jimmy	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	
Lee	↔	1			↔		↔	↔	↔		♦ Sick on 2-22
Marcus	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	
Michael			1			↔	↔	↔	↔		♦ Sick on 2-15.
Scott	↔	1			↔	↔		↔		↔	Sick on 3-1, out of town 3-15
Joe	↔		1			↔					<i>Did not complete the process</i>
Kraig	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	♦
Brett	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	
Mark	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	
Mike		1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	
Jerod						↔	↔				<i>Did not complete the process</i>
Preston	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	♦
Doyle	↔	1			↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	♦
Michael					↔			↔			♦ Out of town 2-22, 3-15 & 22, wedding stuff 3-1 <i>Did not complete the process</i>
Graham						↔					<i>Visited once</i>
Daq						↔		↔		↔	<i>Auditing</i>
JD						↔					<i>Visited once</i>
Total (24)	16	16	1	1	16	20	17	18	16	16	21 men (3 auditing?) & 3 teens audit or visit

* Attended Fellowship, February 8 at Hallford home

♦ Attended Gifts & Temperaments mini-seminar 3-1 (3 + 1 @ 8:00, 5 @ 11:00) and/or 3-8

➤ Summary: 16 men completed the training, 2 men & 1 teen attended twice, 2 men + 2 teens attended once

APPENDIX 9

WEEK 2: MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH ARLINGTON TEXAS PERSONAL ASSESSMENT 1

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help men assess their servant-leadership level of development by comparing themselves to the characteristics of the servants described in Acts 6:1-6. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will evaluate yourselves based on the qualities described in Acts 6:1-6. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your participation in this group, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Overview

Over the next two weeks you will assess your service-leadership level by comparing yourself with qualities found in men from Acts 6:1-6, 1 John 2:12-14, and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The assessment may cause you to reflect on your past ministry, will help you to measure where you are today in ministry, and will hopefully give you a vision of where you can be in future ministry.

Significant Bible Texts on Servants

▣ **John 13:14-17** ~ *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

▣ **John 15:16** ~ *Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.*

▣ **John 15:20** ~ *Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

Goals of the Personal Assessment Process

1. Encourage all men in their spiritual growth
2. Develop all men in their ministry effectiveness
3. Promote fellowship between brothers in Christ
4. Discover men God is setting aside to serve Him as model servants (deacons)

Biblical Context

In Acts 6:1-6, seven men were selected for a specific task, requiring specific personal qualities, and recognized by the people who chose them. The apostles outlined the qualities for these model servants. The people chose the men (servants). The men carried out the needed service.

Instructions

Complete the following by ranking yourself on a 1-10 scale with “10” being highest and “1” being lowest. Beware of “blind spots” ~ if your spouse or best friend took this assessment for you, how would their assessment differ from yours? Below is Acts 6:1-6 in italics with Pastor Jimmy's comments bold and in parenthesis. Questions to answer are under each verse(s).

↓ Text: Acts 6:1 (comments bolded and in parentheses) ↓

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number (church growth), a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews (disunity), because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

↓ Question 1: How important is church unity to me (circle a number)?

<i>I'm usually part of the Problem</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>I'm usually part of the Solution</i>
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↓ Text: Acts 6:2 (comments bolded and in parentheses) ↓

So the twelve (the early elders) summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables (need of assistance in shepherding). "

↓ Question 2: How important is shepherding God's people (circle a number)?

<i>Someone else's responsibility</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>My responsibility</i>
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↓ Text: Acts 6:3 (comments bolded and in parentheses) ↓

"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men (model servants) of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task (physical need).

↓ Question 3: How much do I model spiritual service (circle a number)?

<i>I have no ministry</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>I maximum ministry involvement</i>
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↓ Text: Acts 6:3 (comments bolded and in parentheses) ↓

"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men (model servants) of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task (physical need).

↓ Question 4: How strong is my reputation (circle a number)?

<i>Very bad</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Strong witness in the community</i>
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↓ Text: Acts 6:3 (comments bolded and in parentheses) ↓

*"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men (**model servants**) of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task (**physical need**)."*

↓ Question 5: How full of the Holy Spirit am I (circle a number)?

“Full of the Spirit” criteria are based on Ephesians 5:18-25; 6:4

<i>No devotional life</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Daily devotional life (5:19a)</i>
<i>Irregular public worship</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Faithful public worship (5:19b)</i>
<i>Complain a lot</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>“Always giving thanks” (5:20)</i>
<i>I only think of my needs!!!</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒ □ Single: relevant but not applicable	<i>I biblically serve my wife’s needs (5:25)</i>
<i>I exasperate my children</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒ □ I have no children	<i>I practice biblical fathering (6:4)</i>

↓ Text: Acts 6:3 (comments bolded and in parentheses) ↓

*"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men (**model servants**) of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task (**physical need**)."*

↓ Question 6: How willing am I to meet physical needs (circle a number)?

<i>Little to none</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Every right opportunity</i>
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↓ Text: Acts 6:4-6 (comments bolded and in parentheses) ↓

(4) *"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (**elder responsibilities**)."* (5) *The statement found approval with the whole congregation (unity); and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch (**model servants - all Greek names**).* (6) *And these they brought before the apostles (**confirmation**); and after praying, they laid their hands on them.*

↓ Question 7: How much desire do you have to be selected by the congregation to be a model servant who can work with elders (circle a number)?

<i>None</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Strong conviction</i>
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APPENDIX 10

WEEK 3: MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH ARLINGTON TEXAS PERSONAL ASSESSMENT 2

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help men assess their servant-leadership level of development by applying to themselves characteristics described in 1 John 2:12-14. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will qualify yourself based on the spiritual maturity levels described in 1 John 2:12-14. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your participation in this group, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Overview

Over the next two weeks you will assess your service-leadership level by measuring yourself against qualities found in men from Acts 6:1-6, 1 John 2:12-15, and 1 Timothy 3:7-13. The assessment may cause you to reflect on your past ministry, will help you measure where you are today in ministry, and hopefully give you a vision of where you can be in future ministry.

Significant Bible Texts on Spiritual Growth

¶ Romans 8:29 ~ *From the very beginning God decided that those who come to Him should become like His Son.*"

¶ Hebrews 5:13-14 ~ *"For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But meat belongs to those who are mature, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"*

¶ James 1:22, 25 ~ *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

2 Peter 3:18 ~ *Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.*

Goals of the Personal Assessment Process

1. Encourage all men in their spiritual growth
2. Develop all men in their ministry effectiveness
3. Promote fellowship between brothers in Christ
4. Discover men God is setting aside to serve Him as model servants (deacons)

Instructions

In 1 John 2:12-14 three levels of spiritual maturity are identified: fathers, young men, and children. Similar to physical and emotional development, a person's spiritual maturity has similar characteristics. For each characteristic you will assess yourself on a 1-10 scale with "10" being highest and "1" being lowest. Beware of "blind spots" ~ if your spouse or best friend took this assessment for you, how would their assessment differ from yours?

 1 John 2:12-14 *I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.* (NKJV)

COMPARISON OF ALL 3 STAGES

Descriptions ↓		STAGE #1 Children ↓			STAGE #2 Young Men ↓			STAGE #3 Fathers ↓			
Maturity Level ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spiritual Status ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
State of Heart ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Relational Word ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Motivation ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Word of God ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
General Needs ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Participation Level ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Commitment Level ⇒		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

APPENDIX 11

WEEK 3: MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH ARLINGTON TEXAS PERSONAL ASSESSMENT 3

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help men assess their servant-leadership level of development by applying to themselves characteristics described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will qualify yourselves based on the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your participation in this group, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Overview

Both last week and today you have been assessing your service-leadership level by measuring yourself against qualities found in men from Acts 6:1-6, 1 John 2:12-15, and 1 Timothy 3:7-13. The assessment may cause you to reflect on your past ministry, will help you measure where you are today in ministry, and hopefully give you a vision of where you can be in future ministry. Because deacons are "model servants," we measure ourselves against the qualities and qualifications of deacons found in the Bible. Whether or not we qualify as model servants, we should aspire to live up to the standards identified in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 to be the best servant possible for the Lord Jesus Christ and the people He has called us to serve with our lives.

Qualifications of Deacons: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

(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. (11) Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. (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.*

Goals of the Personal Assessment Process

1. Encourage all men in their spiritual growth
2. Develop all men in their ministry effectiveness
3. Promote fellowship between brothers in Christ
4. Discover men God is setting aside to serve Him as model servants (deacons)

Instructions

Below are the qualities and qualifications for New Testament deacons. Based on the message preached this morning on 1 Timothy 3:8-13, plus your understanding of this text, evaluate your personal growth and example in each area. Rank yourself on a 1-10 scale with “10” being highest and “1” being lowest. Beware of “blind spots” ~ if your spouse or best friend took this assessment for you, how would their assessment differ from yours? Additional questions for each area are for the specific purpose of deacon qualification.

“Reverent” ~ *serious minded about serious things* (circle a number)

<i>Silly and Flippant</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Commands respect</i>
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“Not double-tongued” ~ *won’t confuse people with two different words; insincere* (circle a number)

<i>Say one thing, then another</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Consistent speech</i>
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“Not given to much wine” ~ not chemically dependent; does not depend on alcohol or drugs to handle life; use alcohol or drugs as a crutch (circle a number)

<i>Addiction</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Abstinence</i>
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Should a deacon (model servant) consume alcohol as a beverage?

“Not greedy for money” ~ money is not his master, but is his servant (circle a number)

<i>Materialistic / thief</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Trustworthy / generous giver</i>
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Would your past and present financial dealings qualify you as a deacon?

“Holding to the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience” ~ *strong spiritual convictions; respects biblical truth; supports sound doctrine. He follows God's commandments. He holds to God's Word with a pure conscience (circle a number)*

<i>Live by my opinions</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>Know and live by God's Word</i>
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Q. How well do you know “why” you believe what you believe?

“Tested” ~ *he has an established ministry-track-record before he is considered a model servant; a worker, not “honorary” position. A Deacon is proven; he has demonstrated by actions; he is a servant (circle a number)*

<i>No ministry record</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>High ministry record</i>
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“Blameless” ~ *does not have some disqualifying fault to which others can point out; this does not assume he has a sinless past (circle a number)*

<i>Easily accused</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>High moral record</i>
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“Let deacons be the husbands of one wife ruling their children and their own houses well” ~ *strong marriage; a one-woman-man; good home leader (circle a number)*

<i>Adulterous</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒	<i>One-woman-man (even if single)</i>
<i>No spiritual leadership</i>	⇒ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ⇒ □ I have no children	<i>Spiritual Leadership of children</i>

APPENDIX 12

PERSONAL VISION FOR MINISTRY: YOUR T.A.L.E.N.T.S. SEEN THROUGH THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

“Don’t Waste Your Life”

- God has a life plan for each man (Psalm 139:14 and Jeremiah 29:11)
For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10 (NASV)
- Each man can discover his unique, God-given **TALENTS**, and learn how to use them in ministry: **Temperaments Ambitions Leadership Style Experiences Needs Talents (abilities) Spiritual Gifts**
- How did the Apostle Paul’s **TALENTS** shape him for ministry?
- ◆ **Paul’s Temperament** ~ Personality: blend of common psychological characteristics
“For you have heard of my past . . . I persecuted the church with fanatical zeal . . . and did my best to destroy it . . . I was ahead of most of my contemporaries in the Jewish religion, and had a boundless enthusiasm.” Galatians 1:13-14 (Ph)
 - We will cover “Temperaments” in the *Membership and Ministry Profile* (week 5)
- ◆ **Paul’s Ambitions** ~ Passion: what Paul felt strongest about; drove him to action
“My constant ambition has been to preach the gospel where the name of Christ was previously unknown, and to avoid building on another man’s foundation.” Rom. 15:20 (Ph)
 - “*For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.*” Galatians 2:8
 - “*Life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus . . .*” Acts 20:24 (LB)
 - We will cover “Ambitions” in week 7
- ◆ **Paul’s Leadership Style** ~ how Paul’s personality and character motivated / impacted others. Paul influenced others by being directive, serving, encouraging, relating, teaching, and modeling.
“. . . I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews became a Jew . . . to those who are without the Law, though not being without the Law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may be all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it.” 2 Cor 9:16-23
 - We will cover “Leadership style” in week 7

◆ **Paul's Experiences** ~ Paul's personal knowledge, observations, and activities from the past, that has shaped his life for the present and equipped him for the future

Some spiritual experiences that shaped Paul in serving the Lord as an apostle:

- ✓ taught by Gamaliel the Law of God (Acts 22:3)
- ✓ watched Stephen's stoning (Acts 8:1)
- ✓ conversion on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1-20)
- ✓ 3 years maturing in Arabia (Gal. 1:18)
- ✓ special vision from God (2 Cor. 12:2-6)
- ✓ thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
- We will cover "Experiences" in week 6

◆ **Paul's Needs** ~ "lackings" revealed by Paul's strengths and weaknesses. God in meeting such needs drew Paul closer to Himself and other believers to accomplish his life mission (Paul's personal fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission)

*"And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a **thorn in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to buffet me from exalting myself!"* 2 Cor. 11:7

- We will cover "Needs" in week 7

◆ **Paul's Talents** ~ physical, mental, and emotional "abilities" that provided Paul opportunities to honor God, minister to believers, and connect with lost people.

*"And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla ...and because he was of the **same trade**, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tentmakers."* Acts 18:2,3

- We will cover "Needs" in week 6

◆ **Paul's Spiritual Gifts** ~ Paul's special capabilities, given by the Holy Spirit, that empower him in his service of Jesus Christ, for the good of others, and the unity and growth of the church (Ephesians 4:7,8,12,13)

"And of this gospel I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher."
2 Timothy 1:11

- We will cover "Spiritual Gifts" in the *Membership and Ministry Profile* (week 4)

Paul's (TALENTS) Life-Conclusion ~ 2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

APPENDIX 13

WEEKS 4-5: MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND TEMPERAMENTS (PERSONALITY)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to encourage and exhort men in their spiritual walk with God and one another. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will complete a spiritual gifts and temperaments discovery profile and learn how to apply them in ministry. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your participation in this group, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Overview

God has given us *TALENTS* (Temperament, Ambition, Leadership style, Experiences, Needs, Talents / abilities, and Spiritual gifts) to experience God and minister to others. Over the next two weeks you will discover and learn to apply your Spiritual gifts and Temperaments (Personality) in ministry. Two publications will be utilized for weeks 4 and 5:

1. *Uniquely You Membership and Ministry Profile*
2. *Membership and Ministry Action Plan: After Identifying Your Giftedness—Now What?*

Reports

Upon completing the Spiritual Gifts and Personality profiles, you will be asked to provide Pastor Jimmy with the results (reverse side). These results will assist him in ministry assessment. The results will only be viewed by Pastor Jimmy and his wife, Angela, who will be assisting him.

Scriptural Basis

- ✓ **God gives gifts:** *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow* (James 1:17)
- ✓ **God's design of us is good:** *I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well* (Psalm 139:14)
- ✓ **God wants pastors & teachers to equip people in their gifts:** *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ*

Instructions

1. Meet with Angela Hallford the next two Sunday morning at 11:00 am to complete the *Membership & Ministry Profile* on Spiritual Gifts and Personality. If you have previously completed the profile, it is not necessary to attend those sessions.
2. The results of the profile need to be recorded on the reverse side, copied, and turned into Pastor Jimmy.
3. For week 5, complete the *Membership and Ministry Action Plan: After Identifying Your Giftedness—Now What?* This is a 6-day self-reflection study. Be prepared to discuss your discoveries in your small group and receive instruction during the large group time.

Your Name: _____

Spiritual Gifts ~ List by Top Scores (e.g. Top score goes in #1)

#	Spiritual Gift	Score	Your Comments
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			

Personality / Temperaments

	Graph 1 (M)	Score	Graph 2 (L)	Score
D				
I				
S				
C				

Goals of the Spiritual Gifts and Personality Sessions

1. Appreciation to God for how He has gifted each person
2. Understanding and recognition of your own spiritual gifts in relationship to others in their giftedness
3. Understanding and recognition of your own Personality (Temperament) in relationship to others in their giftedness
4. An increased desire to glorify God in ministry (service) with our TALENTS

APPENDIX 14

WEEK 6: MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING AMBITION, LEADERSHIP STYLE, AND NEEDS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help men assess their servant-leadership level of development by identifying individual drives which impact others. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Halford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will complete the "Ambitions, Needs, and Leadership Style" worksheets, which will identify how these drives can affect ministry potential.. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Overview

God has given us *TALENTS* (Temperament, Ambition, Leadership style, Experiences, Needs, Talents / abilities, and Spiritual gifts) to experience God and minister to others. Over the next seven days you will pray, reflect, and summarize your ambitions, leadership style, and needs. This form is intended for your use only.

Reports

No reports will be turned in for this exercise. There can be very private discoveries that can only be shared with God, your spouse, or a best friend. You are free to share less personal items within your small group or in the large group time if it edifies: Ephesians 4:29 ~ *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

Scriptural Needs

- ✓ **Ambitions:** *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts. And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way* (Ps 139:23-24)
- ✓ **Leadership Style:** *Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ* (1 Cor 11:1)
- ✓ **Needs:** *And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* (Phil 4:19)

Instructions

1. Complete each worksheet at home or in a private place, identifying as best as possible your ambitions, leadership style, and needs
2. Spiritually reflect on God's design of you with a Jer 29:11 attitude
3. In prayer, submit your ambitions, leadership style, and needs to the glorify of God and the good of others in ministry
4. Be discerning how much you share with others about your discoveries. Some sharing edifies, while other disclosures can be a burden for others to carry (Eph 4:29)

“A” is for Ambition

Your hands shaped me and made me. Job 10:8

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:16

“The Bible uses the term heart to describe the bundles of desires, hopes, interests, ambitions, dreams, and affections you have (Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*).”

In other words your heart is the real you! You have a unique emotional “heartbeat.” This heartbeat causes us to care about certain things. Another way of describing our care for certain things are the words “Passion” and “Ambition.”

Identify one legitimate thing (not sin) that makes your heart beat faster: _____

Discovering My Ambition

INSTRUCTIONS: complete the ambition exercise by exploring three categories of ambition.

SUBJECTS I LIKE(D) MOST (Childhood to now)

MY PERSONAL INTERESTS (What motivates you, not bores you to tears)

WHERE YOU FEEL MOST EFFECTIVE (What drives you towards perfection)

Q. What do you think is your ambition? _____

Q. As I talk to others who know me best, what do they say about my ambitions (heart)? _____

Q. What do you think it is for you to serve God with all your “heart?” (Deut. 11:13)

“L” is for Leadership Style

Leadership Style ~ how we motivate and impact others through personality and character

... I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews became a Jew ... to those who are without the Law, though not being without the Law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may be all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it.” 2 Corinthians 9:16-23

Q. What is your temperament / personality type? _____

Q. What predominant spiritual growth level did you identify from the Personal Assessment #2?

Circle One:

Children

Young Men

Fathers

◆ How do you seem to best influence others? Being directive? By serving? By encouraging? In a teaching role? Modeling behavior? Speaking? _____

Q. What is a step you need to take to increase your leadership style (personality or character): _____

“N” is for Needs

Needs ~ Strengths & Weaknesses: Spiritual, Mental, Emotional, Physical. Both our strengths and weaknesses are to be submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Why? We are the body of Christ; each part functioning by (1) providing our strengths to other parts and (2) receive others' strengths to shore up my weaknesses. Interdependence means we are stronger together than we are independently. Thus, I need to give my strengths to help other's weaknesses. I need other's strengths to help me with my weaknesses. This principle is spiritual gifts:

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired... And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."... And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Corinthians 12:14-18,21,26

◆ How can God use your physical, mental, and emotional, and spiritual strengths to His advantage? How about your weaknesses? _____

◆ How could interdependence help strengthen you with physical, mental, and emotional, and spiritual struggles? _____

APPENDIX 15

WEEK 7: MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING ABILITIES AND EXPERIENCES

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help men assess their servant-leadership level of development by exploring their known abilities. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will complete an abilities worksheet, which will highlight how natural abilities enhance our ministry potential.. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Overview

God has given us *TALENTS* (Temperament, Ambition, Leadership style, Experiences, Needs, Talents / abilities, and Spiritual gifts) to experience God and minister to others. Over the next seven days you will pray, reflect, and summarize your recognized abilities. This form is intended for your use only.

Reports

No reports will be turned in for this exercise. What you write down will remain with you. However, you may want to consult your spouse, or a friend to expand your observations on your abilities. You are also free to share your discoveries within your small group or in the large group time if it edifies: Ephesians 4:29 ~ *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

Scriptural Examples

- ✓ **Craftsmanship:** Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship (Exodus 31:1-3)
- ✓ **Musicianship:** and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets (2 Chronicles 5:12)
- ✓ **Warriors:** Moreover, Hushai said, "You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men and they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. And your father is an expert in warfare, and will not spend the night with the people (2 Samuel 17:8)

Instructions

1. Complete the worksheet at home or in a private place, summarizing your abilities
2. Spiritually reflect on all abilities with a humble heart (don't think too highly or too lowly)
3. Ask the Lord to use all your abilities to glorify God and do good to others in ministry
4. Consider asking others to help you in identifying your abilities; their observations

“A” IS FOR ABILITIES

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. Psalm 139:13

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

“God designed us so that there would be no duplication in the world (Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*).” This means no other person ever created can fulfill **YOUR** purposes!

Abilities are natural talents you were born with; you did not ask for them, they came with you.

IDENTIFYING MY ABILITIES

INSTRUCTIONS: complete one of each category in class, and the others as a home assignment. What were you and what are you know for?

PHYSICAL / ATHLETIC ABILITIES (Childhood to now)

Group: _____

Home: _____

ACADEMICS / MENTAL ABILITIES (Childhood to now)

Group: _____

Home: _____

MUSIC AND ARTS ABILITIES (Childhood to now)

Group: _____

Home: _____

RECREATIONAL OR OTHER SKILLS (Childhood to now)

Group: _____

Home: _____

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS / RELATIONAL (Childhood to now)

Group: _____

Home: _____

HEART SEARCH HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

(Applying My Abilities Discovered)

Q. How can I use my abilities in ministry to be a servant of Jesus Christ?

● Meditate on 1 Corinthians 10:31

♦ My Answer _____

Q. Am I not using my abilities, thinking someone else can "better" do what my "limited" abilities can do?

● Meditate on Hebrews 13:21

♦ My Answer _____

Q. Am I using my abilities just to make a living and in recreation, or am I also using my abilities for Christ-honoring ministry?

● Meditate on Deuteronomy 8:18

♦ My Answer _____

Q. How would my abilities, combined with other church member's abilities impact Grace Baptist Church to reach our surrounding community?

● Meditate on Ephesians 4:11-15

♦ My Answer _____

Q. Will I surrender all my abilities to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ?

● Meditate on 1 Peter 4:10

♦ My Answer _____

Goals of the Abilities Session

1. Appreciation to God for the abilities he gives to me and others
2. Understanding of my own abilities
3. Recognition of the importance of abilities in others
4. An increased desire to glorify God in ministry (service) with my abilities

**Week 7: Men's-Servant and Deacon-Training
Experiences Worksheet
Grace Baptist Church Arlington, Texas**

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help men assess their servant-leadership level of development by identifying and discerning their life experiences. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop male servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will complete an experiences worksheet, which will identify how life experiences can affect ministry potential.. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Overview

God has given us *TALENTS* (*Temperament, Ambition, Leadership style, Experiences, Needs, Talents / abilities, and Spiritual gifts*) to experience God and minister to others. Over the next seven days you will pray, reflect, and summarize your life experiences. This form is intended for your use only.

Reports

No reports will be turned in for this exercise. There can be very private experiences that can only be shared with God, your spouse, or a best friend. You are free to share less personal items within your small group or in the large group time if it edifies: Ephesians 4:29 – *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

Scriptural Examples

- ✓ **Accomplishments:** "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God." (1 Samuel 17:36)
- ✓ **Personal Testimony:** since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. (Acts 26:5)
- ✓ **Personal Experiences:** Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony (John 3:11)
- ✓ **Deacon Qualifications:** These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. (1 Timothy 3:10)

Instructions

1. Complete the worksheet at home or in a private place, summarizing your life experiences
2. Spiritually reflect on all experiences, painful and pleasant with a Romans 8:28 attitude
3. Ask the Lord to use all your experiences to glorify God and do good to others in ministry
4. Be discerning how much you share with others about your experiences. Some sharing edifies, while other disclosures can be a burden for others to carry (Eph 4:29)

“E” IS FOR EXPERIENCES

“You have been shaped by your experiences in life, most of which were beyond your control” (Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*).

- 6 types of experiences from your past have shaped you for serving Christ.

INSTRUCTIONS: summarize your life in each category, considering as you write how God wants to use those experiences to shape you for further ministry (Romans 8:28)

Family Experiences ~ What did you learn growing up in your family?

Education Experiences ~ What were your favorite subjects in school?

Vocational Experiences ~ What jobs have you been most effective in and enjoyed most?

Spiritual Experiences ~ What have been your most meaningful times with God?

Ministry Experiences ~ How have you served God in the past?

Pain Experiences ~ What problems, hurts, thorns, and trials have you learned from?

Goals of the Experiences Session

1. Greater appreciation for and trust in God for all your life experiences
2. Healing from painful experiences and willingness to use life “scars” for God’s glory
3. Recognition of the importance of how experiences shape future ministry potential

APPENDIX 16

WEEK 7: MEN'S SERVICE TRAINING EVALUATION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Men's Service Training over the last 7 weeks. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop males servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will take a two-page survey today to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Overview

The service training was designed to strengthen men in their relationship with God, with other men, and the body of Christ. Prayerfully, you are better encouraged and / or equipped to use your TALENTS for the glory of God and the good of people.

Instructions

This is an anonymous survey concerning the effectiveness of the men's service training. Below are 11 elements of the training. Evaluate each by ranking the effectiveness on a 1-10 scale with "10" being highest and "1" being lowest. Additional comments are encouraged as they will assist in improving the training process for future groups.

- ◆ **Inner Circles** ~ small group time, holding basic spiritual accountability and sharing lives together around servant training. *The time we spent in our groups was...*

Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful

➤ Comments: _____

- ◆ **Personal Assessment 1 (Acts 6:1-6)** ~ my measure of being a model servant who meets physical needs, preserves unity, and supports elders. *The assessment was...*

Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful

➤ Comments: _____

- ◆ **Personal Assessment 2 (1 John 2:12-14)** ~ my self-measurement of spiritual maturity: children, young man, or father? *The assessment was...*

Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful

➤ Comments: _____

- ◆ **Personal Assessment 3 (1 Tim 3:8-13)** ~ my self-measurement of character qualifications as compared to deacons. *The assessment was...*
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- ◆ **Temperaments** ~ my unique combination of personality traits. We explored four basic traits called, "DISC." *The time we spent on temperaments was...*
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- ◆ **Ambitions** ~ understanding the Bible's use of the word, "heart," or our passions, desires, hopes, interests, dreams, and affections. *The time spent on ambitions was...*
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- ◆ **Leadership style** ~ how I motivate and impact others through my personality and character. *The time we spent on Leadership Style was...*
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- ◆ **Experiences** ~ how my life has been shaped by family, education, work, spiritual walk, ministry, and pain (circumstances). *The time we spent on ambitions was...*
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- ◆ **Needs** ~ Real life requirements found in spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical strengths and weaknesses. *The time we spent on ambitions was...*
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- ◆ **Talents** ~ the natural "abilities" I was born with.
The time spent on ambitions was...
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- ◆ **Spiritual Gifts** ~ special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to be used in service.
The time we spent on spiritual gifts was...
 Not Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Helpful
 ➤ Comments: _____
- Overall Comments: _____

APPENDIX 17

PERSONAL ASSESSMENTS AND TALENTS SUMMARY

Week	Emphasis	Consideration	Your Assessment
1	Acts 6:1-6 (PAF #1)	<i>To the right are 3 qualifications. Rank them 1, 2, and 3 from strongest to weakest ➔</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Reputation <input type="checkbox"/> Full of the Holy Spirit <input type="checkbox"/> Full of Wisdom
2	1 Jn 2:12-14 (PAF #2)	<i>Which spiritual maturity level best represents me now? (check one) ➔</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Children <input type="checkbox"/> Young Men <input type="checkbox"/> Fathers
3	1 Tim 3:8-13 (PAF #3)	<i>There are 8 qualifications listed to the right. Place an "S" On the 4 you feel the most Stable.</i> <i>Place a "G" by the 4 you feel you need the most Growth ➔</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Respectable (blameless) <input type="checkbox"/> Genuine (not faking it) <input type="checkbox"/> Sober (not an alcoholic) <input type="checkbox"/> Honest with money <input type="checkbox"/> Know & live God's Word <input type="checkbox"/> Proven (tested in ministry) <input type="checkbox"/> One-woman-man <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Leader at home
4	Spiritual Gifts	<i>My top 3 Spiritual Gifts are ➔</i>	① _____ ② _____ ③ _____
5	Temperaments (Personality)	<i>My personality profile ➔</i>	Primary: _____ Secondary: _____
6	Talents (Abilities)	<i>My top 3 talents (abilities) I want for God to use in ministry are ➔</i>	① _____ ② _____ ③ _____
	Experiences	<i>My top 3 experiences that have shaped me for ministry are ➔</i>	① _____ ② _____ ③ _____
7	Ambitions (Passion)	<i>Concerning ministry, what I feel strongest about (have a passion for) is ➔</i>	① _____ ② _____ ③ _____
	Leadership Style	<i>My leadership style (how I influence others) can best be described as ➔</i>	
	Needs	<i>The spiritual, or physical, or mental / emotional needs that most influence my ministry right now are ➔</i>	

APPENDIX 18

WEEK 10: NEW DEACON GROUP TRAINING PERSONAL CONFLICT STYLE INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help deacons identify their preferred method of dealing with conflict. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jimmy Hallford for purposes of Pastor Jimmy's doctoral project and Grace Baptist Church's need to develop males servants and select new deacons. In this research, you will take a one-page on-line survey that measures for preferred styles of conflict management. Any personal information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Overview

Psychologists since the 1970's have suggested 5 different preferred styles of managing conflict. While some of the styles are recognized as better in general situations, all the styles are useful in specific situations. An understanding of how people approach conflict can be very useful in the conflict resolution process.

Instructions

1. Go to the following web address and complete the on-line "Adult Personal Conflict Style Inventory." [Http://peace.mennolink.org/cgi-bin/conflictstyle/inventory.cgi](http://peace.mennolink.org/cgi-bin/conflictstyle/inventory.cgi). Questions are identified from "A" to "T."
2. At the bottom of the page, under the "T" question, left hand side, click on "Submit." The inventory should take less than 30 minutes.
3. Print out the "Adult Personal Conflict Style Inventory Tally"
4. If you do not have access to the Internet, the church had two computers that can be utilized.
5. Bring your tally sheet with you to the next meeting
6. If you need assistance, contact Pastor Jimmy at 817-372-4834

APPENDIX 19

CONFLICT RESOLUTION CASE STUDY 1 NEW DEACON GROUP AND APPRENTICE TRAINING

The following is an adaptation of an actual situation in a Southern Baptist Church. The names and church has been changed to prevent speculation. Today's training is intended to stay within this group; sharing of the situation outside this group can cause others to speculate. In today's situation, the entire group will work together.

Situation

- The chairman of the deacons receives a phone call from the vice chairman.
- The vice chairman says he received a phone call from a church member who states that a family member told him that one of the deacons who left the church claimed that some members of the finance committee (who count the church offerings every week on a rotating basis) were pocketing some of the loose cash.

What are some immediate practical things the chairman should do? What are some of the issues and thus, what are some of the deacon's options at this particular point?

Situation Continued

- The chairman instructs the vice chairman not to share this situation with anyone else (including other deacons or his spouse), and that he would contact the senior pastor.
- The senior pastor is made aware (no names given him), and he has the financial secretary check deposits for cash giving patterns with all counters. They discover no pattern to support the charge.
- The chairman instructs the vice chairman to call the family member and ask that they not report this to anyone else, and ask the other family member to do likewise; if they already have spread this report, contact them and ask them not to spread it anymore. Finally, tell him that the charge against the finance committee will be investigated.
- Since overseeing the finance team is part of the deacon ministry, and since the accuser is a former deacon of that church, the chairman and vice chairman choose to confront the accuser at his home (elders are aware and they agree to the procedure).

That are other considerations at this point in the process?

Situation Continued

- The chairman and vice chairman visit the former deacon.
- The deacon immediately admits saying what he said to the church member, believing he is right in his accusation.
- The chairman asked is he had any real proof of such an occurrence, and the accuser's answer is "no." He just believes it to be so based on very limited information.
- The chairman points out the unbiblical nature of such an accusation, and other issues such an accusation brings with it. He also points out that unless the accuser withdraws his accusation and corrects his mistake, the chairman will have no choice but to bring this charge to the attention of all the finance committee, in which case his accusations would be made aware to all spiritual leadership. The accuser reluctantly agrees, but shows no serious remorse.
- The chairman tells the accuser he must contact the church member whom he spoke to and admit he was wrong in making such an accusation without proof. Then, he needs to ask the person to contact the other family member to report what happened and agree to limit knowledge about this to only those who already know.
- Fortunately, it seems that the situation is contained to the accuser, 2 deacons, senior pastor, and the two families. The financial secretary is never told of the situation that necessitated for her to check into giving and counting patterns.

How does Matthew 18 apply to this process? Based on information provided above, are these other things that could have or should have been done?

APPENDIX 20

CONFLICT RESOLUTION CASE STUDY 2 NEW DEACON GROUP AND APPRENTICE TRAINING

The following is an adaptation of an actual situation in a Southern Baptist Church. The names and church has been changed to prevent speculation. Today's training is intended to stay within this group; sharing of the situation outside this group can cause others to speculate. In today's situation, small groups will work together then gather for large-group debriefing. Today's session will focus on the diagnosis process.

Situation

- A church is in the process of deciding to relocate the church and sell their buildings due to over 20 years of decline, a poor location, and inadequate space and parking.
- 3 deacons in a group of 10 oppose the relocation and begin voicing opposition.
- One of the three begins going house to house and spreading lies about the pastor such as, "he's in this for the money," or "he's just waiting for a bigger church opportunity." The associate pastor directly hears these charges during a home visit is able to refute every charge.
- This deacon, while not the most impressive of men, seems to have a lot of power in his ability to stir up trouble. Tensions rise among the remaining deacons and pastoral staff. The pastor seriously considers leaving, especially when a much larger church starts courting him to be their next pastor.
- The pastor is thoroughly committed to the gospel, and is willing to follow the Lord's leadership in the relocation need. He is viewed as a hard-nosed leader but has included church leadership and the congregation in the decision-making process

What are some of the biblical issues at hand?

What are some of the scriptures that need to be considered?

What are some of the options (good or bad) that can followed?

APPENDIX 21

CONFLICT RESOLUTION CASE STUDY 3 NEW DEACON GROUP AND APPRENTICE TRAINING

The following is an adaptation of an actual situation in a Southern Baptist Church. The names and church has been changed to prevent speculation. Today's training is intended to stay within this group; sharing of the situation outside this group can cause others to speculate. In today's situation, small groups will work together then gather for large-group debriefing. Today's session will focus on both diagnosis and solution stages.

Situation

- **Current:** A mother of a high school junior girl asks you to meet her at a public park due to an emergency. A situation known to you reaches a new level of tension. The reason she wants to meet you is to try a new situation away from her husband, who she fears will overreact. She thinks that if you can help her, maybe things might not turn really bad.
- **Background:** A college male and ministry leader in the church has formed a relationship with this high school junior girl. The parents like the man but do not support the relationship, primarily due to the age and stage difference. The two of them have been secretly staying in contact (no sexual indiscretion).
- **Hot Issue:** You meet the mother at the park. She shows you a letter written by the male to the daughter, which the mother found by going through her room while the daughter was at school. The man says in the letter that maybe they should run off to Mexico and get married. You know the man very well, and the letter makes no sense; what is written is not consistent with the man's normal behavior or general character.
- **The Request:** The mother wants you to confront the young man in an attempt to diffuse the situation and keep her husband from "blowing up." She also doesn't want any serious damage for her daughter or the young man. She is desperate.

What are some of the biblical issues at hand?

What are some of the scriptures that need to be considered?

What are some of the options (good or bad) that can followed?

- **The Deacon's Response:** Because you want to help, you agree to confront the young man. When you do, you mention the discussion with the mother, and the content of the letter, which you personally read, and asked what all this meant. He smiles and says that he wrote a sarcastic letter, and that the two had kidded each other with similar talk on the phone. The story is convincing, so you report it back to the mother. She demonstrates a mixture of relief, skepticism, confusion, and embarrassment.

What would have been the best way to handle this situation from beginning to the end?

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL DEACON MINISTRY AT GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, ARLINGTON, TEXAS

James Hubert Hallford, Jr., D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009
Chairperson: Dr. Timothy Beougher

This project examines the development of a biblical deacon ministry. Chapter 1 identifies four goals that deal with creating understanding among the congregation, qualifying model servants, selecting biblical deacons, and training a deacon group. Included in the context of designing a biblical deacon ministry at Grace Baptist Church.

Chapter 2 explores three biblical texts relating to developing a biblical deacon ministry. Acts 6:1-7 is utilized to create a purpose statement for biblical deacon ministry, based on the activities of what this writer considers the prototype deacon group. First John 2:12-14 is examined to qualify the desired spiritual maturity level of deacons (spiritual fathers). First Timothy 3:1-8 examines the specific qualifications of deacons. Special attention was given to drawing conclusions from basic observations of each text.

Chapter 3 addresses one aspect of deacon ministry identified in Acts 6:1-7; preserving unity in the church. One aspect of preserving unity is resolving healthy and unhealthy conflict. Four steps are suggested based on the admonition of Matthew 18:15-17.

Chapter 4 chronicles how Grace Baptist Church developed a biblical deacon ministry based on the biblical texts covered in chapter 2 and resolving conflict in chapter 3. The project chapter 4 chronicles took 16 weeks and included 6 weeks of topical preaching (chapter 2 texts and Matt 18 conflict resolution), 7 weeks of general service training for all men, 9 weeks of deacon and apprentice training, and 2 physical needs ministry projects.

Chapter 5 evaluates the project. The project purpose and all 4 goals are examined. Five strengths and 4 weakness are mentioned. Three reflections cover both elder and deacon identification and functions plus the bottom line on the identity of biblical deacons. A personal reflection is offered and 3 implications for further study are mentioned (deacon-controlled churches, deacons who should be elders, and women deacons)

Vita

James Hubert Hallford Jr.

PERSONAL

Born: December 9, 1958; Oklahoma City, OK
Parents: James, Sr., and Jeanne Foos
Married: Angela Kathryn Skiles, April 11, 1987

EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, R. L. Turner High, Carrollton, Texas
B.S. Religion, Dallas Baptist College, 1982
M.Div., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986

MINISTERIAL

Multifamily Housing Minister, First Baptist Church, Carrollton, Texas,
1983-1986
Executive Pastor, NorthRidge Church, Haines City, FL, 1987-2005
Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas, 2005-