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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A TRAINING CURRICULUM
FOR PROSPECTIVE DEACONS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
MONTVERDE, FLORIDA

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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A TRAINING CURRICULUM
FOR PROSPECTIVE DEACONS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
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PREFACE

This project has been completed with the help of the Lord, and of my family, and with the support and love of the believers at First Baptist Church of Montverde. My adventure to follow the Lord began in 1982, at a Teen Retreat weekend at the New Brunswick Bible Institute in New Brunswick, Canada. Up to this particular event I was nurtured in the faith by godly parents, Cleo and Shirley, who taught and displayed living examples of what it meant to follow Jesus. I owe my spiritual upbringing to them and only feel gratitude for their example as a pastor and wife, as a married couple, and as parents. In God's perfect timing, at age 16, and in another country, I heard the gospel one more time and was deeply transformed by it. Two years later, in Gorham, New Hampshire, I sensed the call of God to serve Him in full-time ministry. My clear desire in that moment was to study and preach the Word of God. From this vocational beginning those who understood and celebrated my call to ministry pointed me toward the discipline of study and spiritual growth within the context of formal education. There have been few years since that time when I was not enrolled in some kind of training course whether in a Bible college, a Christian university, or in the context of seminary. For this journey, I am thankful and have been impacted by the many professors from whom I have been privileged to learn.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to my wife, Debra, for her partnership in the journey with me. She has rarely known a time in our married life when I was not either entering or completing an educational program. We have been through three graduations together as a married couple, and her love has been a consistent and encouraging force in times when I could not see the finish line. We anticipate enjoying one more graduation together in the days ahead as the Lord helps us to complete this

doctoral program. The Lord blessed Debra and me with His miracle, our daughter, Stephanie Faith, on January 3, 2001. Her arrival was both for our joy and for our healing. She is also walking with me on this path and is a persistent reminder that the gaining of knowledge can never replace the call to love and impact those closest to you. I rejoice in the confidence that both she and my Debra are not only my earthly family, but that each of us has been made a part of God's eternal family.

My time and contact with the professors at Southern Seminary has truly been a privilege. I am grateful to Brian Vickers for his helpful feedback and direction with respect to completing the final chapters of my doctoral project. These chapters were reviewed and edited by the most professional and capable editor a doctoral student can have. I am truly indebted to Betsy Fredrick for her assistance in helping me to put my thoughts on paper and in proper style.

Last, I need to say a necessary word of thanks to the church family that has given to me the opportunity to be a shepherd again, after having made a difficult exodus from full-time ministry in October of 2001. When the call to serve came from the First Baptist Church of Montverde on January 4, 2004, it was clearly an act of love on God's part, to return me to ministry, and also on the part of the members, to affirm God's favor on my life. God placed me within the believers at FBCM to allow me to learn from them and to give me the opportunity to experience His faithfulness and grace. This is the context in which I sought to complete my doctoral program and the context in which I have been encouraged and supported to grow as a brother, as a student, and as a pastor. I love this church and am loved by this church.

Jonathan Goforth Winningham

Winter Garden, Florida

December 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a training curriculum to provide more information and guidance to men who are prospective deacons at First Baptist Church, Montverde, Florida.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to present a biblical basis for providing guidance to men who are prospective deacons. On three Sunday Mornings the Church members were presented with a series of sermons concerning the formation of the role of deacon. This goal was measured by the completion of a rubric¹ which the pastoral church staff and all active deacons evaluated and provided feedback concerning the content of the sermons. This goal was successfully met when the evaluation by the pastors and deacons yielded at least a 90 percent sufficiency level for each indicator included in the rubric.

The second goal was to develop a six-week training curriculum that provided additional biblical information and more personal guidance to prospective deacons. This goal was measured by the completion of a rubric² with which a select review group of five active church members evaluated and provided feedback concerning the development of the six-week curriculum. This goal was successfully met when the evaluation by the select review group yielded at least a 90 percent sufficiency level for

¹See rubric in appendix 1.

²See rubric in appendix 2.

each indicator noted in the rubric.

The third goal was to implement the training curriculum by means of providing a six-week class for up to twelve men who desired additional instruction as prospective deacons. This goal was measured by means of a questionnaire administered to each participant both prior to and after the six-week sessions.³ A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine if there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-class and post-class questionnaires. This goal was accomplished when the t-test results provided positive statistically significant differences between the two questionnaires given during the training series.

Ministry Context

Fifty-six years ago, in 1959, thirty Baptist believers who had been meeting together with Methodist believers were provided with a piece of property and the financial resources from First Baptist Church of Clermont to build their own church building. Though a process of ordaining deacons was spelled out in the founding documents, there is no good record of any deacons being ordained over the next forty-three years and all pastors during this time were either bi-vocational or simply served as pulpit supply. Discord reduced the membership per a church split which occurred in the late 1980s and resulted in the founding of Grace Baptist, now situated just outside of Montverde. By the year 2001, Montverde Baptist Church had diminished to an active membership of eight and these members were united in their intent to turn over the church title and all assets to First Baptist Church of Clermont. Pastor Danny Davis of Clermont informed his church of the need in Montverde and thirty-five active members of First Clermont were led to move their energies and membership to help the struggling church in Montverde. Among them came three ordained deacons as well as a retired minister, Ted Yarbrough. With this new spiritual leadership in place, the church enjoyed

³See questionnaire in appendix 3.

a beneficial stability and was re-incorporated as the First Baptist Church of Montverde in 2002. Along with these new active deacons, Yarbrough continued to provide bivocational spiritual leadership until transitioning during the summer of 2003. In January of 2004, the church, with 46 active members, made the decision to call the first full-time pastor in the history of the church. For the past eleven years, the First Baptist Church of Montverde has experienced growth through conversions and transfers and now operates with 142 active members and an average worship attendance of 120. The church's commitment to provide Bible studies for all ages has resulted in a small group average approaching one almost hundred persons each week.

During these past years there has been a very productive relationship with as many as five active deacons at one time and as few as four men, as is the case today. The constitution and by-laws were updated in 2008-2009 and stated more clearly concerning the process of calling deacons, the qualifications, and their role in serving the church alongside of the pastor. Between death, retirement, bad personal health, relocation, or personal issues, the active deacons have diminished in number. In the early years, with more deacons and with fewer member families, the deacon family plan was implemented with each man having between five and ten families to give specific attention. This worked well for a while but as active deacons transitioned and new deacons failed to be added to the ministry it has become apparent that the shepherding aspects of the deacon ministry should be shared among the small group Bible study leaders. The small group Bible study leaders have been willing to take additional steps to follow up on their missing group members and to inform the pastor and deacons of needs which should be addressed but were beyond the capacity of that small group leader. This has been the mode of operation for the past five years and has been somewhat effective as the concern for others is distributed beyond that of the deacons alone. Monthly meetings with the deacons are being faithfully maintained for the purpose of prayer, assessing the overall

spiritual health and progress of the church family, and for the task of providing on-going discipleship of these men as servant leaders.

An acceptable level of care and shepherding is being maintained to the 76 families that now comprise our fellowship. Though the active baptized membership is 141 the actual number of persons included within these families is 176. Added to this number are 50 to 60 regular guests who attend a worship service at least once during the month and who call our church their home though not being members yet. The strength of the membership relationships overall is temporarily sustaining the care and connection for over two hundred persons on a monthly basis, but there are levels of more intentional care that we simply cannot provide and sustain without additional recognized lay leadership. In the most recent years, the active deacons have been approaching men within the church family as to their openness to serving as a deacon, but with limited success.

For some men who have turned down the invitation recently it is apparent that for personal reasons their lives are simply not where they can give attention to serving. For others it is probable that they are unfamiliar with the role and unsure of what it means to be and to serve as a deacon. In the face of this imbalance of lay leadership and membership, we have recently initiated the launch of new small group Bible studies utilizing all the space we currently have. Even then, the increasing number of members and the accompanying needs that have naturally increased within the church dictate that steps be taken to communicate to the church concerning the need and privilege for men to serve the Lord in this biblical and necessary role of deacon. As was my original intention I have preached a series of messages and informed the church concerning the need and challenge to develop men toward becoming spiritual leaders, and specifically, that of a deacon. Beyond the series of messages, I provided a six-week series of class sessions that has resulted in several men stepping forward to serve the Lord and His people as deacons. I am deeply grateful to the Lord for placing the desire to serve Him into the

hearts of these faithful men.

Rationale for the Project

With the increased growth within our church of new believers and new members is the obvious need for those who are qualified and equipped to assist the pastoral staff in ministry. The church currently has one full-time senior pastor, a full-time minister of worship, a part-time office manager, a part-time visitation pastor, and four active deacons. The process of identifying and developing men for deacon service has been defined by our constitution but had not resulted in educating the new members about the origin, practice, and qualifications for a deacon. Before this project, efforts had not been made by me or by anyone to do so. Thus, although the role of a deacon was viewed within our church as both biblical and necessary, there still remained a gap in the knowledge of our men about what that role is, what the biblical basis may be for the role's existence, and who is qualified to serve in that role. As a result of my project this lack of knowledge has been addressed and our new men are being provided with the necessary mentoring to embrace the deacon role.

Our men come from church backgrounds which may or may not have utilized the role of the deacon, or they have come to join our church having little biblical understanding of their privilege to be spiritual leaders. A commitment to follow the Scriptures dictated that the biblical role of men in the life of the church be clearly defined and that a path to serve in this way be provided. This developmental path toward spiritual leadership within the life of the church is now the given expectation for all of the men, even those who may not desire or qualify fully for the role of deacon. The qualities of a recognized church leadership role are now being elevated and set forth to be the aspiration of all of the men, whatever role they embrace within the life of the church family. Of necessity we have defined these qualities publicly for all to be both aware of and for all men to aspire to.

The overall growth and health of our church necessitated that we take seriously

the task of developing men for spiritual leadership, and more specifically, the role of a deacon. With the addition of new believers and members has come the increased need for men who are both qualified and available to respond to the concerns of the fellowship. Those who are called to pastor and to provide the primary leadership and instruction simply are not able to bear the collective concern that has increased as the congregation has numerically grown. We are seeking to recruit and train additional small group Bible study leaders on the aspect of caring that can take place within the small group setting so as to address the many needs which have at one time only been known to the current pastor and deacon ministry team. These needs at times involve financial needs, serious health concerns, and even marriage and family issues. The four men who currently serve as deacons are godly and willing men, but they also have families and work full-time jobs in addition to their concern for the church family. The church has needed additional qualified partners in the ministry and as a result of this project now has new men who are sharing in and responding competently to these needs alongside of our currently active deacons.

Great benefits have been experienced from the implementation of this project. The primary benefit has been the privilege of meeting with the men of the church with a clear intention of calling them to embrace their role as a spiritual leader. These men have grown as they have walked through the Scriptures and allowed God's Word and the biblical explanation to shape their thoughts. These sessions have answered their questions about spiritual leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ, and what that service looks like in our specific church setting. The church has experienced the addition of several new men to the current deacon ministry and this has inspired an increased partnership between the church, the pastors, and the deacons. With the new development of these men and their role as spiritual leaders within the life of the church, it is clear that we have increased the health of the congregation in at least two ways. First, the church will simply be better able to address the collective concerns of a growing congregation

and maximize opportunities to share the truth within a context of compassion. Secondly, with the additional deacons, the pastoral staff will feel reduced pressure to direct energies away from preaching, teaching, and in intercessory duties that are meant to be biblically instrumental in stimulating the initial growth and development of the ministry.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Several terms will need specific attention in that they will have a significant impact on and contribution to the project. Throughout this project the terms church leadership, deacon, healthy church, and team leadership will be defined as follows.

Deacon. David D. Ireland, in *The Ministry of the Deacon*, defines the word deacon as “runner, messenger, or servant . . . the rendering of deacon (Greek word is διακονος) occurs about 30 times in the New Testament (NT) and it means ‘minister’ or ‘servant’”⁴

Healthy church. In *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics*, Stephen A. Macchia defines the healthy churches as marked “by boldness of heart, conviction of spirit, and determined wills to be and become all that God intends.”⁵

Team leadership. George Barna describes team leadership in *The Power of Team Leadership*: “Leadership works best when it is provided by teams of gifted leaders serving together in pursuit of a clear and compelling vision.”⁶

This project developed and presented a curriculum for prospective deacons during a fifteen-week period. A six-week study followed a series of publicly preached messages. The class was limited to men (age 18 and above) who were recognized to be active members within the life of the First Baptist Church of Montverde and who were

⁴David D. Ireland, *The Ministry of the Deacon* (Montclair, NJ: Impact 2004), 20.

⁵Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1999), 25.

⁶George A. Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2001), 7-8.

personally enlisted by the pastor. The class was limited to twelve men and all participants signed a written statement promising to faithfully attend all six weeks of the study group.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project involved the preaching of three messages on the necessity of deacons and these sermons served the purpose of challenging the men of the church to give focused consideration to this need within the life of the church. The content of these messages was previewed and assessed by the pastoral staff and active deacons within the church. This assessment was facilitated by means of a rubric which examined content, clarity, and a clear intent to persuade men to commit toward the six-week training sessions that followed. This goal was considered successfully met per the evaluation by the pastors and deacons yielding beyond a 90 percent sufficiency level for each indicator noted in the rubric.

To fulfill a second goal, a six-week curriculum was developed that assisted all the men who were led to pursue a greater understanding of who a deacon is within our church context. This curriculum was developed by means of examining specific biblical references related to team leadership and the role of a deacon. Having this biblical basis established, a review of current thought concerning the ministry of a deacon was added and synthesized within the instruction content. In addition to this data, a clear description was provided of what the church believes and requires of the men who are approved to serve as deacons. Included in the development of this curriculum was a review of selected deacon preparatory programs already in existence. The curriculum was taught for six weeks and was held on a weeknight that worked best for all who committed to participate. This goal was measured by means of a rubric that was provided to and completed by a selected review group comprised of five active members who are currently in or have served professionally within educational field. This goal was successfully met the evaluation by the select review group yielded a report exceeding the

minimum of 90 percent sufficiency level for each indicator noted in the rubric.

The third goal involved the implementation of the training curriculum by means of having provided a six-week class for up to twelve men who desire additional instruction as prospective deacons. Participants in the class were enlisted by means of a personal interview with the pastor during which an information form was completed. A pre-class questionnaire was provided to all class participants prior to the beginning of the first class. This same questionnaire was again filled out by all participants immediately after the final class session. The questionnaire was helpful in measuring an increased knowledge about biblical basis of shared leadership as a deacon, a greater familiarity with official church documents on deacons, and an awareness of how active deacons are currently functioning in our the life of our church. A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine a positive statistical difference between the pre-class and post-class questionnaires. This goal was accomplished per the results of the t-test, which demonstrated positive statistical significant differences gained from the comparison of the two questionnaires given during the training series. Class participants were invited to schedule a follow-up interview with the pastors and deacons and several of the men have been met with in private. These men all felt that the additional time with the active church leadership was both helpful in personalizing what they had learned and also supportive in their desire to know how God would have them to respond.

All aforementioned research instruments were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR
PROSPECTIVE DEACONS

Scriptures demonstrate a pattern where God calls men to serve as primary leaders and then summons other men to assist those leaders in the exercise of spiritual service in the life of His people. It is my intention to examine five passages of Scripture in which this pattern or mode of operation appears over several millennia and in the life of God's people. In each of these five case studies I seek to identify the context, the primary leader, the dilemma, the desired outcome, and the method of delegation in addressing that outcome.

**Case Study 1: An Exegesis of Exodus 18:17-18—
God Uses Men in Powerful Ways**

The Context

The book of Exodus is the record of God bringing His people, the descendants of Abraham, out of the bondage of Egypt and into a new relationship with Himself filled with promises and guidance. Exodus 1-3 provide specific introduction of the life and calling of Moses to be the human spokesman on behalf of Yahweh and the one who provides the leadership for the people as they choose to follow their God out of Egypt. In Exodus 4-6, Moses and his brother Aaron appear before the king of Egypt, Pharaoh himself, and declare that the God of the Israelites has commanded their release. This declaration is predictably not well-received by Pharaoh, and Moses' credibility and authority are both questioned and maligned by the Israelites and by the Egyptian leadership. In Exodus 7-13, Moses is given specific knowledge by God that a series of plagues will be thrust upon Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt that will be so destructive

that the Israelites will be willingly released and actually encouraged to leave. These plaques are implemented, God is properly feared, and the people of Israel are finally given leave by Pharaoh to exit the land of Egypt. In Exodus 14-17, Moses is directed by Yahweh to lead the exiting people of Israel on a path that will be very difficult and challenging to their faith in God, in Moses, and in the vision of a better future. The journey from the land of Egypt to the base of Mount Sinai tests everyone's patience.¹ The difficult circumstances, and God's response to these challenges to his character, work to establish Moses' leadership among the people. God used the escape through the Red Sea and the judgment upon the Egyptian soldiers who pursued to demonstrate His power to protect His people. He showed Himself faithful in the midst of a waterless journey of three days that ended with Moses providing sweet water from the bitter pool, as well as manna and quail for food. At another waterless moment God used Moses to remedy their thirst by the smitten rock. The victory over Amalek was the means by which Yahweh demonstrated His power and desire to provide for His people and also His intent to use Moses as His identified leader. It is into this setting that Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, makes his visit from Midian after hearing that Moses and the people of God have in fact been led to the very mountain where Moses received his initial experience with Yahweh and would do so again in chapter 18. Stuart explains,

The geographical placement of the Israelites also makes the narrative placement of this story logical: Jethro certainly knew where Mount Sinai was since in his employment under Jethro's authority Moses had driven his sheep there (3:1). This all may have been prearranged: Moses had sent Zipporah and his sons back to Jethro when he came to the border of Egyptian-controlled territory, with the understanding that Jethro would bring them back to him at Sinai/Horeb since God had assured Moses that he would indeed return to Sinai, bringing the Israelites out of Egypt with him (3:12).²

¹Walter F. Kaiser, *Exodus*, in vol. 1 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 452.

²Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 402.

Moses welcomes Jethro with both honor and affection and then recounts all that Yahweh has done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians to bring about the release of the people. He also tells how God is sustaining them through the difficulties that have been a part of their journey. In short, Moses testifies that God's strength and power is sufficient to overcome whatever they have faced.³ This testimony is used to bring Jethro to voice praise and a confession of faith that in fact Yahweh is greater than all gods that are believed in by the surrounding peoples. Jethro presents a burnt offering⁴ to God on the altar that Moses had built in chapter 17 and a celebrative meal is provided for Aaron and all of the leadership from among the people. This celebration takes place in the very presence of God.

The Primary Leader

The previous description of the context for chapter 18 gives clear evidence that Moses is to be the primary spokesman, leader, and spiritual instructor on behalf of Yahweh. Moses' honest recount of his experiences to Jethro demonstrated recognition that there would be times of hardship along with the good days. Stuart comments,

A tendency exists in the modern evangelical "testimony" to emphasize only victorious, successful parts of one's experience as a believer. Note how something of the opposite prevails in Moses' discussion with Jethro: he told him "about all the hardships they had met along the way," not to the exclusion of telling him "how the LORD had saved them" but with a proper balance of the difficulties and the deliverances, lest his potential convert wrongly think that God does not allow his people to face many dangers and trials in the process of their ultimate deliverance.⁵

These thoughts of God's greatness but also of His purpose in hardship may be part of what kept Moses single-handed in the midst of an incredibly difficult and burdensome

³Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1974), 328.

⁴Kaiser, *Exodus*, 469.

⁵Stuart, *Exodus*, 411.

task.⁶ While Jethro looks on, Moses begins the day by sitting in one place and welcoming one person or family at a time; he listens to their need for guidance, explains what he knows of God's laws and ordinances, and then issues a decision for them to follow. This was no ordinary task as observed by Keil and Delitzsch:

The people came to Moses 'to seek or inquire of God' (vs. 15), i.e., to ask for a decision from God: in most cases, this means to inquire through an oracle; here it signifies to desire a divine decision as to questions in dispute. By judging or deciding the cases brought before him, Moses made known to the people the ordinances and laws of God, for every decision was based upon some law, which, like all true justice on earth, emanated first of all from God.⁷

These moments of instruction and guidance happen for those who have simple problems requiring advice, as well as for those who have serious issues of injustice or crime. The priority of the concerns did not matter. It was first-come, first-served, from morning to night and Moses is the only one who is authorized to render a verdict on their issues.

Again Stuart explains,

Through him the people asked God for answers to their disputes, and thus Moses asserted that he did not really judge on his own but "decides between the parties and informs them of God's decrees and laws." In other words, the legal process involved the revelatory process in this case. That was almost certainly the reason Moses had felt obligated to do all the judging himself; the answers involved God's own decisions, and Moses understood himself to be the sole conduit for those to the people.⁸

The Dilemma

Jethro has been overwhelmed by what Yahweh has done and yet when he sees what Moses' life looks like on a daily basis he is stunned. The sheer magnitude of what Moses is trying to accomplish by himself is too much for him to handle and after the day is over he begins his inquiry. Moses' response to his questioning is both sincere and

⁶R. Allen Cole, *Exodus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, vol. 2 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2008), 147.

⁷C. F. Keil and K. Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 376-77.

⁸Stuart, *Exodus*, 416.

honest but does nothing to change Jethro's concern for the situation.⁹ The intent behind Jethro's questioning was not a call for Moses to discontinue his pursuit of God for the guidance and needs of the people. It was a challenge of Moses' current understanding of how his particular role was to be exercised with respect to the judicial needs of a massive community numbering in the hundreds of thousands. The inefficiency was plainly obvious to someone who saw it for the first time and ironically it was Jethro, the priest of Midian, and Moses' father-in-law who was motivated to address it.¹⁰ Jethro did not dictate the terms but simply gave his counsel and said essentially that if God presided over the plan, it would succeed.¹¹

The Desired Outcome

The response of Jethro is one of careful reverence to what Yahweh is doing through Moses. The role of Moses to render necessary decisions and to instruct the people of God's laws and ordinances is neither doubted nor diminished by the inquiry. What Jethro is helping Moses to see is that in the midst of a group the size of the emerging Israelite nation there will be a myriad of issues that need some guidance or directive. Though Moses was used to accomplish great things for God and was to be the primary instructor of God's laws and ordinances he was also to remain open to the variety of ways God would guide him personally. Childs comments,

Now it has long puzzled commentators that Moses, who had 'spoken mouth to mouth' with God and was his mediator *par excellence* should have depended on the practical advice of a foreign priest, albeit his father-in-law, for such an important element in the life of the nation as the administration of justice. Later exegetes developed a number of theories by which to explain the problem. Yet the remarkable thing is that Old Testament itself does not seem to sense any problem on this issue. The narrative moves back and forth with apparent ease between advice

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Nahum H. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Schocken, 1996), 127.

¹¹Kaiser, *Exodus*, 469.

offered on the level of practical expediency (vs. 17f.) and statements about God’s will which supports the plan (vv. 19, 23). No tension appears between these two poles because both are seen to reflect the divine will to the same extent. Because the world of experience was no less an avenue through which God worked, the narrative can contribute the organization of a fundamental institution of Israel’s law to practical wisdom with any indication that this might be thought to denigrate its importance to the divine economy.¹²

As a result of Moses’ humility and Jethro’s wisdom, the course of judicial efficiency was in place for both current and future generations of Israelites seeking guidance and justice.

The Means of Delegation

The counsel of Jethro recommended that Moses select men who are competent (“capable men, men of worth”)¹³ and devout in their respect for who God is. They are to be trustworthy and committed to rejecting efforts to distort justice through bribery.

Although these qualities would assume an intellectual understanding of the task, they were primarily put in place to identify those demonstrating moral excellence.¹⁴ Stuart agrees:

These would lead the people as “officials”—people who were appointed to an actual societal office and did not take on a judging role merely as a task ancillary to their tribal rank or the like. Thus contrary to the Israelite priesthood or the ancient Near Eastern monarchy, the Israelite judiciary was to be appointed on the basis of honesty and ability rather than occupy an office automatically by reason of being born into a hereditary role.¹⁵

This massive division of labor, among the varied size groups, provided the means for all concerns to be addressed and Moses only deciding on the hardest cases but this was not to minimize the significance of all decisions.¹⁶ The Scripture records that Moses “listened . . . and did everything” that Jethro counseled him to do. This was both amazing and within God’s perfect will for Moses and for His people.

¹²Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 332.

¹³Kaiser, *Exodus*, 470.

¹⁴Cole, *Exodus*, 149.

¹⁵Stuart, *Exodus*, 417-18.

¹⁶Cole, *Exodus*, 147.

Case Study 2: An Exegesis of Numbers 11:10-17— God’s Response to Moses’ Feelings of Being Overwhelmed and Alone in His Leadership

The Context

The events described in Numbers 11:10-17 take place three days after the meeting of great importance at Mount Sinai and just after God’s fiery and lethal judgment upon His people for their persistent complaining against Him. Ronald K. Allen describes the spiritual failure:

Now the people revert to the behavior that marked their early experience in the wilderness. This attitude of ingratitude against the covenant was seditious and malicious against the person of God. They were actually in a breach of covenant, deserving of the divine suzerain’s wrath.¹⁷

This change of heart towards God illustrates how spiritual mountaintop experiences can quickly be discarded by the personal demands of the flesh. This current passage describes the dilemma of addressing needs within a group of followers and is the kind of experience that confronts anyone chosen for a leadership position. The fact of the matter is that leading people anywhere that involves hardship and sacrifice will ultimately generate complaining and second-guessing—which can bring a leader to his or her emotional end. Numbers 11 opens with a series of declarative verses that describe the ungrateful temperament and rebellious disposition of those whom Moses was called to lead and his role in appealing to God to spare their lives. R. K. Harrison comments,

Quite probably the people were fatigued after their experience of marching for three days. The euphoria of the Sinai experience was now being put to practical test, and the Israelites discovered, like many saints since that time, that the “mountain-top” experience is not infrequently followed by a sojourn in an emotional and spiritual “valley.” Their complaints are not specified in the MT, but the fact that they even indulged in such ungrateful behavior shows how superficial was their thankfulness to God for His mighty deliverance from Egypt, and how little was their faith in Him as provider and in Moses as His appointed leaders.¹⁸

¹⁷Ronald B. Allen, *Numbers*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 186.

¹⁸R. K. Harrison, *Numbers*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 182.

Verses 3-9 describe a “rabble”¹⁹ rebellion particularly directed toward the menu that God was providing as they made their way to the land He has promised them. Their reflections on how good they had it back in Egypt was both not accurate²⁰ and a direct affront to the goodness of God in keeping them alive in the wilderness. The rebels attacked the virtue of the manna which God provided, and declared their “souls are dried up”²¹ or “wasting away.” This was not the first time Moses heard them complain against his own leadership but even more significant was their ingratitude and anger expressed against God. Over an extended period of time a leader who is persistently bombarded by seemingly impossible demands and criticism becomes a candidate for displaying those very same attitudes towards others, and ultimately towards God.²²

The Primary Leader

Moses was called by God to be the one who would lead His people out of Egypt. He had many personal weaknesses and in fact tried to disqualify himself from being used by God (Exod 3). Still God promised that His presence would go before him and equip him to do as he was asked to do. The only way this journey of faith would be obediently traveled would be as Moses found his source and strength in God alone. At times, as in this passage, Moses simply could not see God’s power beyond his own obvious weakness, and his cry for vindication was lifted up in prayer. Harrison comments,

Exhausted by all the responsibilities that had been placed upon him since the departure from Egypt, Moses felt that he could no longer lead the Israelites if they

¹⁹Allen, *Numbers*, 195.

²⁰Timothy R. Ashley, *Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 208.

²¹Harrison, *Numbers*, 184.

²²R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers*, The New American Commentary, vol. 3b (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 187.

had lost their faith in God and needed to be nursed as helpless children or cajoled as recalcitrant burdens, and he does so on the basis of his own past fidelity to the Lords' commands. But in his desperate condition he would prefer death to continuing under the current circumstances, as other servants of the Lord were also to affirm in later days (Elijah, I Kings 19:4; Jeremiah 20:14-18).²³

Verse 10 tells that the complaining Moses heard was evil to him and to God, and it made him angry. Verses 11-15 describe what one author suggests is a "lament" before God. Others just see it as a poetic heart expression with a mixture of challenges to God's goodness and a rebellious desire to be "fired" from what God called him to do.²⁴ In any case, one cannot miss the barrage of questions that Moses does not seem to really want God to answer. It is as though Moses already knows what the answer should be to each of these questions and leaves God with no time to respond. The final accusation in this conversation with God is Moses' contention that God has not treated him properly and needs to end the pleasure of watching him fail miserably.²⁵ Besides all of the complaining of the people, God must have been grieved to hear his own hand-selected leader/servant berate His own goodness and wisdom in choosing Moses to lead His people out of bondage. The Scriptures do not tell anything about God's feelings, but they do describe His merciful response toward Moses.

The Dilemma

The dilemma as Moses saw it was captured in his statement, "I can't carry all these people by myself. They are too much for me" (v. 14). Moses was not actually alone in his experiences but his feelings replaced the reality of God's presence. From Exodus 17 God has used the wisdom of Jethro to give him at least fifty other men to help with the judicial aspects of leading the people. Still, when it came to feeding several

²³Harrison, *Numbers*, 186.

²⁴Cole, *Numbers*, 187.

²⁵Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 85.

hundred thousand persons a menu they all liked, the task was simply beyond him. The prayer Moses prayed revealed what he felt was the breaking point for his own existence and might be described as the “Lament of Moses.”²⁶ Whether one reads poetry into this collection of questions by Moses or not, the raw feelings produced by the stress of his calling are clear. These are questions every individual who has ever led God’s people may find themselves asking at some point in their leadership journey. It is the cry of the overwhelmed and the one who has lost sight of God’s ability to complete what He begins. A suggested paraphrase of Moses’ thoughts is as follows:

1. God, why have you asked me to live a life which includes this non-stop trouble?
2. God, why are you angry with me? What have I done?
3. God, what did I do to deserve the crushing burden of trying to serve all of these people?
4. God, was it my idea to bring this mass of people (to Father them) into existence?
5. God, was it my idea to conceive²⁷ your people and then “mother” them and feed them at the sacrifice of my own very life?
6. God, where do I get meat for 2 million²⁸ out here in the wilderness? They are crying to me for a new menu . . . they don’t like your “manna,”²⁹ now what?
7. God, I cannot carry all of these needs by myself, they are too heavy³⁰ for me. You have got the wrong guy . . . and I said this when we were back at the burning bush.
8. God, if I am just going to be in place to receive the punches that the people really want to send your way then go ahead and end my miserable meaningless life . . . do it. Right now.
9. God, if in fact I am doing and being what pleases you (failing miserably at what you called me to do and be) then reward me this way: put me out of the misery of my own self-awareness of frustration and despair.

²⁶Allen, *Numbers*, 191.

²⁷Milgrom, *Numbers*, 85.

²⁸Allen, *Numbers*, 193.

²⁹Ashley, *Numbers*, 209.

³⁰Milgrom, *Numbers*, 86.

This honest collection of cries reveal not only Moses' immediate struggle but also predict a personal on-going struggle within him and his choice to trust God. Cole expounds,

Moses' despair concerning his life's lot parallels those of other notables in Israel's history. Job cursed the very day of his birth in the midst of his season of suffering, and Jeremiah likewise bemoaned his conception and birth in the midst of the shame he experienced in being beaten and imprisoned by Pashhur in Jerusalem. At this point in his leadership ministry, Moses faces a crisis of faith and dependency, preferring death as a favor from God rather than continuing to have the responsibility of directing such a rebellious rabble. The Lord responds with grace and yet also with judgment. Moses would get some relief, but in the long run this was just the beginning of troublesome years to come.³¹

The Desired Outcome

God had two merciful responses to Moses' cry before Him. The first was a directive which would help Moses not feel alone in the burdens of leadership but would share it with a selected group of Spirit-empowered men.

The question arises whether this spirit ("*ruah*"), part of which was transferred by Yahweh from Moses to the elders, is Moses' spirit or Yahweh's Spirit that is upon Moses. On the side of it being Moses' spirit is the fact that this spirit is already upon ("*al*") Moses, and not a special imbue ment poured out from on high on these elders. This phrasing is probably meant to keep clear the distinction between Moses' status and that of the elders. It is precisely this special status that will be at stake in chapter 12. On the other side, of the approximately forty instances in the OT where the word "*ruah*" is used with the preposition "*al*" meaning "upon," twenty-five are clearly references to God's Spirit, seven are references to other "spirits" sent by or from God, and eight are references to other "spirits," six of these are clearly the human spirit. It is common in the period of the Judges and the early monarchy that mighty deeds (including prophesying) were the result of God's Spirit being or coming upon a person. All this would make one lean toward interpreting the spirit here as being Moses' only in the sense that it was upon him. The source of the Spirit is Yahweh; he sent it. Certainly Moses himself understands the Spirit as Yahweh's (11:29, 'his (God's) Spirit,' *ruho*).³²

These men had a necessary purpose in serving as officials and were equipped with both leadership and record-keeping skills,³³ which would assist Moses in managing the massive demand. God's second response to Moses was a provision for the people's demand for food but within that provision was a judgment. The purpose for this

³¹Cole, *Numbers*, 188.

³²Ashley, *Numbers*, 211.

³³Cole, *Numbers*, 188.

delegation was stated in verse 17 that Moses would first of all have help in bearing the burden of the people and then secondly, he would no longer feel alone in the task.

The Means of Delegation

God's Word to Moses was a series of commands that He wanted Moses to carry out and then several promises which He himself would keep. A simple thought diagrammatic view of the text demonstrates this in Numbers 16-17:

(You, Moses) Bring me 70 Men
from Israel
known to you as Elders and Officers of the people

(You, Moses) Take them to the tent of meeting
and

(You, Moses) Have them stand there with you

Then, I (God) will come down and speak with you (Moses) there.
I will take some of the Spirit, who is on you (Moses)
And (I God will) put (the Spirit) on them. (HCSB)

And that is what God did. Harrison expounds,

Commentators have generally been quick to warn against the notion that Moses' portion of God's Spirit had been depleted quantitatively, as though it were a material thing. Rather, the men who now shared his spiritual vision to a wider degree that they had done previously would be all the more enabled to support him in the task of leadership to which he had been called. By the divine act of delegating the spiritual gifts, the community would become stronger as all the leaders cooperated with Moses.³⁴

God descended in the cloud that had been leading them and spoke personally with Moses.

Verse 25 says that God took "some" of the Spirit that was on Moses and He placed it (the Spirit) upon 70 additional (see Exod 24:1) elders,³⁵ and they all gave some supernatural evidence that this placement had in fact happened as God predicted.³⁶ The brief "prophesying" was both an evidence for the elders that they were in fact empowered to

³⁴Harrison, *Numbers*, 188.

³⁵Milgrom, *Numbers*, 86-87.

³⁶Allen, *Numbers*, 194.

share in the work with Moses, but it was also evidence to Moses, that he truly was no longer the only one equipped to do the work. Whether this distribution of the spirit really was God’s original intention for Moses is not known, but in this context it is clearly a merciful act on behalf of His servant.³⁷

Case Study 3: An Exegesis of Matthew 10:1-15— Jesus’ Call and Commissioning of the Twelve Men to Serve with Him

The Context

The writer Matthew precedes the calling of the apostles with a mission summary in 10:35-37. Jesus made an intentional effort to visit community centers and locations with a designated name (“towns”) but also to small residential sites (“villages”) with the same message of good news and compassion. He looks at the people before Him and is emotionally moved as he sees both the spiritual and physical “weariness and confusion” in their faces.³⁸ His view of them as sheep without a shepherd draws upon an OT image of desperation (Num 27:17; 2 Chron 18:16; Ezek 34:6). Jesus’ assessment is that the message of the kingdom accompanied by the works of power will bring forth a harvest that God has been cultivating for some time.³⁹ In the midst of this assessment He turns to His disciples and declares that the harvest He envisions will require more workers than are currently in this field of people. His answer to this challenge is to call them to prayer that the “Lord of the Harvest” would send (“thrust”⁴⁰) workers into His

³⁷Harrison, *Numbers*, 186-87.

³⁸Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 239.

³⁹Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33a (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 260.

⁴⁰Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 167.

harvest. Perhaps in the next available moments they lifted their hearts to God and asked that He call workers into the heavenly work of harvesting souls. Morris agrees:

Because there are few workers for the great harvest is incumbent on the disciples to do something. The particular action Jesus singles out is prayer. In an age like ours we would expect a call to more vigorous and effective action ourselves (and situations continually arise when that is the right thing to pursue). But Jesus points to prayer as the really effective thing. No matter how great our personal exertion, we will not be able to gather in the whole harvest. Therefore we need to pray to him who can send out the workers who are needed.⁴¹

The first word of chapter 10 is evidence that God did in fact hear and directed Jesus to summon His 12 disciples, who had just made themselves available for harvest work.⁴²

The Primary Leader

In His flesh, Jesus was born of a woman, the virgin Mary, and lived and worked as a general contractor in the town of Nazareth for almost thirty years. His public life and ministry under the power of the Holy Spirit were initiated upon His baptism by John the Baptizer at the Jordan River. His message was the same one proclaimed by John, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near” (3:17). This message would be the same one declared by His apostles in Matthew chapter 10. This kingdom is unveiled over the next several chapters as a domain of trust, righteousness, truth, and generosity toward God and toward others. It is a kingdom existing within this world but is not of this world. It is a message of hope, forgiveness, and healing to all who will receive Jesus’ identity and words in faith. It is a declaration of God’s power being manifested over sickness, disease, evil spirits, and even death itself. Jesus is declaring loudly and compassionately that a remedy for the consequences of a sinful heritage in Adam is available as one believes in the one whom the Father has sent. Jesus is seeking to

⁴¹Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 240.

⁴²Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 267.

advance this message as He actually walks up and down the dusty roads from one town or village, and it would be this message that he sent his disciples to also declare.⁴³

The Dilemma

The time of harvesting has come and Jesus simply declares that the number of workers in the field is not adequate to bring in what is an “abundant” amount of crops. Once power is placed upon a particular God-provided leader there is then the defined delegation of other God-called workers to accomplish the desired work. This partnership is especially interesting when the one doing the human expansion of His own mission is the very Son of God, through whom everything was made, that is made! The moment does not indicate powerlessness or inability in Jesus but is in fact the initiation of a compassionate plan to transport the message through those who have been personally impacted by His person, and by that message.⁴⁴

The Desired Outcome

Jesus is clear about what He wants to accomplish in this distribution of His kingdom mission. On this particular occasion He instructs the Twelve to go only to “the lost sheep of Israel” and this particular focus served for Jesus as a mission priority.

Hagner explains what might be behind this decision:

The fact that Jesus came initially to Israel and only to Israel underlined the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises, the continuity of this purposes, and also the truth that the church, and not the synagogue, was to be understood as the true Israel. That is, in Jesus God was being preeminently faithful to Israel; and Jewish Christians, although they are united by faith with Gentile believers, have in no way believed in or become part of something alien to Israel’s hope. Jesus is first and foremost Israel’s savior; Israel is saved in and through the church.⁴⁵

⁴³Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 246.

⁴⁴R. T. France, *Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 380-81.

⁴⁵Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 271.

Jesus also communicates the urgency with which the disciples should travel by giving restrictions on how they are to travel and what they would carry. Both the limited audience and the restrictions on ministry supplies would eventually be expanded to include making the gospel known to the Gentiles and also doing ministry with the necessary support.⁴⁶ Jesus' limited outreach to a particular ethnic and geographical location is for the purpose of completely reaching the homes of Israelite people with the clear announcement that the kingdom of heaven has in fact come near. The journey is to be one in which each man is entrusted with derived "authority" from Jesus to address and roll back every conceivable effect of sin upon the human race even to the point of raising the dead. This even applied to confronting the supernatural.⁴⁷ The journey will be one in which each man is solely dependent upon God for his supply and protection and who, after searching, only finds lodging with those who will receive the message. As a final intended outcome, it was Jesus' command that if they or the message of the kingdom was accepted then there would be peace. On the other hand, if they were rejected then a prediction of judgment would be declared on that house or town. The scope of belief and receptivity to the message of the kingdom meant that many might believe together as an entire town or village.⁴⁸ The potential for great impact was inherent in the message and also in the accompanying authority which was given to the disciples.

The Means of Delegation

He summoned the twelve men named in verses 2-4. These men are identified as "His disciples," which means that they were known to be under the teaching and training of Jesus and were to imitate His ways. The choice to summon and commission

⁴⁶Ibid., 270.

⁴⁷D. A. Carson, *Matthew 1-12*, in vol. 1 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 236.

⁴⁸Blomberg, *Matthew*, 173.

twelve men is not without meaning in this context.⁴⁹ He gave them each “authority” (cf. Matthew 7:29; 9:6, 8; 28:18-20) to do works of power simply because they did not have it within or upon themselves. For Jesus to send the men out as His representatives, without authority to do as He was doing, would be to misrepresent who He was and what He could do. Their authority was derived from Jesus and was only a reflection of Jesus’ power each time one of the men exercised that power. The authority was only active as they declared and ministered in a manner consistent with the very message and ministry of Jesus.⁵⁰ The text does not say how He gave them this authority. There is no laying on of hands, a prayer, a command to go to a particular site and wait, or any kind of identifiable evidence that this was taking place, but simply, that “He gave them.” Jesus follows up His distribution of authority with a clear set of instructions on how they are to function. They are not to invent ministry on the way but are to carry it out just as He instructs them. He does not predict what they will experience on the way but defines for them what the lay of the land will probably look like per His own knowledge of the harvest fields. It is only after they are authorized and properly informed that they are sent out as apostles (“sent ones” as in representative).⁵¹ In this way, they do not have everything that they might want for the trip, but they do have what He says they will need to accomplish His purpose.

Case Study 4: An Exegesis of Acts 6:1-7—Delegation Was Necessitated by the Explosive Growth of the Early Christian Church

The Context

The growth of the early Christian church apparently included both Hebraic Jews as well as Hellenistic Jews. These terms are used by Luke to describe a critical

⁴⁹Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 265.

⁵⁰France, *Matthew*, 383.

⁵¹Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 265.

distinction within the developing community. The Hebraic Jews were primarily residents of Palestine while the Hellenistic Jews were of the Dispersion who had settled in Jerusalem from other geographical and cultural locations elsewhere. These groups may have worshipped separately per the language barrier and varied in their appreciation for the temple in Jerusalem.⁵² The religious prejudices that existed between these two groups prior to the emergence of Christianity were not unknown to the greater community. Jewish writings record a particular prejudice against the Jews who had returned from countries not viewed as legitimate dispersion cites from which to originate.⁵³ The cultural and religious distinctions may likely have crossed over into the New Covenant community and Luke acknowledges these by way of recounting the food need among the Hellenistic widows. It would have been natural to prioritize care for those Jewish widows who may have already been living within structures of family and society that was engineered to provide for them. The Hellenistic widows may have moved from other countries to be close to the temple and left all family and ties behind or perhaps became widows after the move toward Jerusalem.⁵⁴ In their acceptance of the gospel, the Hellenistic Jews assumed that care and assistance would be available to their widows as it was described in the early days of the church. Over time, perhaps even five years beyond Pentecost,⁵⁵ the care was not being distributed equitably between the Aramaic-speaking widows and the Greek-speaking widows. The apostles were confronted by the leaders within the Greek-speaking believers about this disparity and agree that it needs to be

⁵²I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1999), 134.

⁵³Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 804.

⁵⁴John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 179.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 178.

addressed. This happens in such a commendable way that it does not cause them to step away from their original calling before God, the preaching of the gospel and prayer, nor does it minimize the tangible needs of the fellowship. Darrell Bock notes,

They (the Apostles) should do what God has called them to do, namely teach and witness. They cannot and should not do everything in the church, but they should not neglect preaching. Καταλειψαντας (“giving up”) means to cease from doing something or neglect one thing for another. Someone else will be able to do this important ministry so that the apostles are free to keep preaching. In the apostles’ view, this ability to prioritize activities and not be responsible to do everything reflects good leadership and stewardship.⁵⁶

The Primary Leadership

The twelve apostles are recognized to be the ones through whom the message of Jesus as the risen messiah is to be proclaimed. They are eyewitnesses of the life and resurrection of Jesus and are given the authority to speak, heal, distribute the Spirit, and render judgment and discipline within the new community. They are called to be fearless and to suffer for the name of Jesus. They are living out their daily lives teaching about Jesus in either the temple or from house to house with whoever is able to be in the locations where they are speaking. They have the awareness that their power is not of themselves and therefore are diligent about seasons of prayer at regular times within their Jewish life. Their priority is to be “witnesses” of what they have seen and heard and experienced while Jesus walked the earth.⁵⁷ By way of the Spirit, Jesus continues to exercise His mission and power in advancing the good news through their public speaking and disciple-making. Yet, in the unveiling of God’s plan it is clear that they will not be alone in the advancement of the gospel. They will share the work with a select group of seven men who will become more effective in organizing the benevolence ministry to widows. It will also be their privilege to assist in reaching an increasingly

⁵⁶Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 259.

⁵⁷Polhill, *Acts*, 180.

Greek-speaking and even Gentile population in the coming years. The text does not reveal a great deal about the seven men who will expand the leadership but together their service will be used to bring about great results.⁵⁸

The Dilemma

Believing that the incredible growth of the early New Covenant community was as Luke describes it, there would have been a great likelihood that the means of care would eventually breakdown with all decisions being centrally located with the apostles. When someone sold property and donated sums of money these gifts were given to and distributed by the apostles (Acts 2). How that distribution was accomplished is not described in the text, but it was probably a blend of the spontaneous address of needs alongside of the regular manner of distributing food, clothing, and supplies on given days of the week or month.⁵⁹ The primary challenge addressed in this passage is that of the Hellenistic-Jewish widows who had become followers of Jesus Christ along with other Hellenistic-Jewish brothers and sisters. The likelihood is that the Greek-speaking Jewish widows did not speak the language of the Hebrew-speaking believers nor did they operate in the same circles, traditions, or have the same degree of family support. In

⁵⁸F. F. Bruce provides helpful background: “All seven appear to be Hellenists (this conclusion does not rest merely on the fact that they all have Greek names); indeed, they were probably the recognized leaders of the Hellenists in the church. Stephen heads the list: he is more particularly described ‘as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit’—a description whose relevance and significance appear very early as the story proceeds (Acts 7). Philip also plays an important part in the subsequent narrative of Acts (chps. 8 & 21). About the other five Luke has nothing further to say. Prochorus is represented in later tradition as being an attendant of John the Evangelist, as bishop of Nicomedia, and as martyred at Antioch. About Nicolaus, the last-named of the seven, two interesting facts are mentioned: he was not a Jew by birth, but a proselyte (a convert to Judaism from paganism), and he belonged to Antioch—Antioch of the Orontes. That the only one of the seven to have his place of origin named should belong to Antioch may be a token of Luke’s special interest in that city (to which, according to tradition, he himself belonged).” F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 121.

⁵⁹Polhill, *Acts*, 180.

other words, the existing structure for serving the needs of the believing widows did not work for these Greek-speaking widows and they began to be in great need.⁶⁰

The Desired Outcome

The problem was identified and promptly addressed by the apostles in cooperation with the believing community and with the appointment of “seven” additional leaders. Bock suggests some significance of the number seven:

The number seven may have some Jewish significance, as Josephus indicates that in Galilee seven judges were appointed to oversee many cities to assess lesser disputes while seventy elders took on more significant issues. This number shows up in Hellenistic culture to refer to the size of ancient councils. There is no official or “deacon” office here. These men take on this assignment to make sure that it is dealt with and no longer remains a problem.⁶¹

While humbly receiving criticism, the twelve moved everyone to unite toward the dual goal of maintaining clear gospel proclamation alongside of the need to care for the community.⁶² The text does not inform how the new leadership addressed the needs, but it does state that the preaching of the Word of God brought about an increase in the number of new disciples and that some of that growth came specifically through the conversion of many within the ordinary Jewish priesthood.⁶³ Luke seems to want to make a point that the church moved forward more united and that a recognizable and quantifiable fruitfulness was experienced as a result how the crisis was handled. Bock adds this observation:

The fact that so many Hellenistic leaders exist points to the early church’s multiethnic and multicultural makeup. The adopted solution is also revealing at another level. The disciples do not fragment along ethnic lines or suggest separate communities be formed along ethnic lines. Rather, they are committed to working together. They may well have recognized that there is strength in numbers, and a

⁶⁰Bock, *Acts*, 258.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 259.

⁶²Marshall, *Acts*, 134-35.

⁶³Bruce, *Acts*, 123.

powerful testimony is created when different groups can be seen working together in a world often divided along ethnic lines.⁶⁴

The Means of Delegation

The apostles responded to the complaint voiced by the Hellenistic widows by requesting that the community identify seven men “from among you” to whom the task of “serving” could be given. The community was immediately pleased with this solution and promptly responded with the selection of seven qualified men, each having a Greek name. It seems to be a good assumption that each of these men came from within the Hellenistic group of believers.⁶⁵ The requirements given by the apostles were simply stated but profound. They were to be men known to be filled with the Spirit and also to be men of wisdom. Longenecker adds, “The words ‘full of the Spirit and wisdom’ evidently refer to guidance by the Holy Spirit and skill in administration and business, which both singly and together are so necessary in Christian service.”⁶⁶ Bock concurs:

In this context, to be filled with the Spirit means that their lives are directed by God’s Spirit so that they are spiritually sensitive, able to make good judgments, a sign of spiritual maturity. . . . They will have responsibility for caring for the widows, although other texts make it clear that this is not the only way they minister for the church.⁶⁷

The men were presented to the apostles, a prayer was said together, and hands were laid upon them to show the singularity of the mission of preaching and the ministry to the widows.⁶⁸ These seven men were then entrusted with the ministry of serving the widows with the result that the apostles were able to continue their priority calling of preaching and praying. There is a particular but limited significance to the reference to the apostles

⁶⁴Bock, *Acts*, 261.

⁶⁵Longenecker, *Acts*, 806.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Bock, *Acts*, 260.

⁶⁸Polhill, *Acts*, 181-82.

laying their hands on these men. The focus is not upon the apostles but upon their recognition and affirmation of how God had led the congregation in the selection process.

Bock explains,

The apostles perform this rite on behalf of the community to underscore God's choice of these men for this task. The laying on of hands is strictly symbolic; formal ordination into ministry is a later practice of the church. These leaders already have the Spirit before hands are laid upon them. This is probably not the origin of the office of deacon. . . . However, the principle of designating a set of laborers for this kind of task is probably what led to the creation of this office at a later time.⁶⁹

The passage declares that the willingness of the apostles to make ministry adjustments while maintaining the preaching about God brought spiritual expansion to the church community. Longenecker concludes,

The early church seems to have been prepared to adjust its procedures, alter its organizational structure, and develop new posts of responsibility in response to the existing needs and for the sake of the ongoing proclamation of the word of God. . . . Luke's narrative here suggests that to be fully biblical is to be constantly engaged in adapting traditional methods and structures to meet existing conditions, both for the sake of the welfare of the whole church and for the outreach of the gospel.⁷⁰

Case Study 5: An Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:7-12— The Pattern of Shared Leadership in the Office of Deacon

The Context

This letter written to Timothy was targeted to address multiple concerns within the church at Ephesus. William Mounce summarizes the issues:

The major problem in the Ephesian church was its leadership. From within the ranks of the church, a group of false teachers had sprung up who were perverting the gospel and teaching a message that ultimately stemmed from Satan. Not only was their theology erroneous, but their behavior was reprehensible. They were sexually promiscuous, lacked reserve and dignity, were teaching for financial gain, were drunkards, and looked down upon marriage. Those who were married were not

⁶⁹Bock, *Acts*, 262.

⁷⁰Longenecker, *Acts*, 808.

managing their households, much less the church. As a result, they were bringing reproach upon themselves, the church, and the cause of Christ.⁷¹

One of these issues relates to the identity of the church leadership and the kind of character required to provide genuine spiritual leadership. The qualifications for both the overseer and of the deacon are spelled out in the same portion of the letter and overlap in many respects in the terms used to describe them.⁷² The specified virtues in the list for both overseer and deacon all seem to be specifically targeted against the lack of integrity and spiritual character existing in some of the Ephesian church members. I. Howard Marshall states,

On the whole, qualities required are the same for both overseers and deacons are also such as would be required in any member of the Christian congregation; there is no ‘higher standard’ for church leaders, but it is expected that they will actually show the qualities which are desirable for all believers...the spiritual and ethical stress and the emphasis on holding to the faith indicate that the leaders to be chosen stand against the heretical teachers and opponents. The concern is thus largely with Christian character rather than with specific qualities or skills appropriate to the task in mind.⁷³

Paul’s choice to define the two offices provided Timothy with the instruction necessary to help the church identify who would best be in place to exercise biblical authority and concern over the congregation. Clarity in these matters would be in place to identify men who could partner in ministry with these overseers to see that the local church ministry matured and accomplished all that the Lord would have it to accomplish. The formal office of deacon is only actually addressed in two places in the New Testament (1 Tim and Phil 1:1), which probably indicates that the development of the overseer (elder) and deacon offices working together became a necessity per the age and growth in numbers of a particular church family. The overseers are to safeguard this gospel by teaching the truth personally and insuring that the truth is taught and lived out within the life of the

⁷¹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 184.

⁷²See appendix 1 for full comparison of qualifications.

⁷³I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 1999), 472.

church. The deacon role appears to share in that burden but with a different priority in combination with it. The offices of overseer and deacon are simply necessary realities of a pattern that has appeared in the previous case studies in Scripture. For the church in Ephesus the opponents of the apostle Paul (and of Timothy) were busy spreading false doctrine, which required those elders/overseers who could teach the truth to contend with them. On a second level, the corrupt infiltration of these troublesome members in the financial and ministerial functions of the church required that they be relieved of these duties and that qualified individuals be identified to replace them and thus the deacons. This two-pronged approach to the overall church ministry is an inevitable duality as the needs of the church family are both spiritual and physical. In both realities there is a common need for those who will serve the Lord and His people providing clear and genuine evidence of both character and spiritual giftedness. Timothy, acting on behalf of the apostle Paul, did not oversee the church at Ephesus as an “overseer,” but served in place of Paul to see that the church identified and selected qualified men to strengthen and perpetuate the gospel mission in Ephesus.⁷⁴

The Primary Leadership

The person exercising the greatest authority in addressing the challenges of the Ephesian church is the apostle Paul, and as his apostolic representative, the disciple Timothy. God has used Paul to establish the church in Ephesus and commissioned Timothy to return there to help develop the ministry further. Timothy received the letter from Paul and in it the apostle directs him to define the roles of overseer and deacon for the church. Paul is the recognized apostle of the church and is empowered and commissioned personally by the resurrected Jesus to advance the gospel and make disciples throughout the known world. His authority to do this is related to his commission but built into it is the awareness of a limited amount of time, i.e. his lifespan.

⁷⁴Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 155.

His letters include the clear statements of his authority to declare the truth revealed to him by the Lord, but also describe the reality that his apostolic letters, in harmony with the permanent indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, are to provide the basis and credibility for human leadership and service within each group of believers. The continuity of the apostle's office is not to be extended beyond that of his own life and of the life of those others designated as "apostles." Their commission and purpose in being apostles is fulfilled in their writings under the guidance of the Holy Spirit which serves as the operating authority within each congregation. Thus, the offices defined as overseer and of deacon are not meant to be equated with the succession of the apostolic office, but are in fact the further progress of the revelation of God's mind and will for His people with respect to order and leadership within the church body. The mission of declaring and advancing the gospel is the basis for the need for roles of spiritual leadership whether it be as an overseer, or as a deacon.

The Dilemma

The problem in the Ephesus church appears to be that the leadership who emerged over the 10 years of the life of the church had either disqualified themselves through their false teaching, or perhaps others selfishly desired the power associated with leadership and were clearly not qualified. Paul speaks to the actual work of the devil either taking place or potentially taking place within the hearts of some in the church. The list of qualifications for both the overseer and deacon would seem to indicate a lack of integrity in the church leadership, which was evidenced by false teaching such as a distorted view of marriage, by lying, by stealing from ministry funds, by ambition fueled by financial gain, and more. There was a clear need for Paul to speak for defined offices which by their very nature would recover the call for holy living and for the highest quality of greatness in the Lord's kingdom, a servant's heart.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 197.

The Desired Outcome

For the man who surrenders to serve as a deacon, Paul predicts two rewards for him personally (v. 13). The first is a “good standing,” which means that their witness and the life they live will be affirmed and respected deeply by the church family in which they serve. They will be “looked up to” not as authority figures but as men who have provided overwhelming evidence of their allegiance to the Lord Jesus and of their tangible love for the people of God. The second reward is a clear assurance and personal confidence whenever he shares the reality of Jesus Christ in him. There is a history of spiritual evidences of God’s work in and through him that free him to be bold and unshakeable in his confession of the faith before the church family and also in the community. I. Howard Marshall agrees:

The best explanation is that faithful service leads to a good standing or esteem in the eyes of the community and of God. . . . There is also a second reward for good service. Παρρησια is capable of expressing a number of ideas depending on its context, such as outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech, openness to the public, courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness. While the thought of boldness of speech might fit the task of deacons in exhortation, the prepositional phrase τη εν Χριστω Ιησου, has changed the orientation toward Christ. Thus the more likely sense is that of “confidence” or “assurance.” The sphere of this sense of confidence is the deacon’s belief εν Χριστω Ιησου . . . the thought is the (deacon’s) relationship with Christ which is characterized by faith.⁷⁶

The Means of Delegation

The apostle Paul seems to communicate that any man who desires to serve as an overseer or deacon ought to make that desire known to the church. In the case of the church at Ephesus, Timothy would preside over the necessary review (“testing”), but it would include the input of the other existing leaders as well as from the entire body of believers. This testing process would involve a period of time of comparing the character qualities defined by Paul in his letter to Timothy alongside of the behavior of those who either were already in position or who desired to serve. An assessment of the practice of their life would be the primary basis for their eventual welcome into the office of a

⁷⁶Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 496-97.

deacon. There does not seem to be a particular “call” to ministry of either an overseer or a deacon, but rather a God-given willingness and desire to be used of Him in serving the Lord and His people with character and spiritual giftedness. The particular qualities provided for the office of a deacon are similar to the qualifications of an overseer, but stated with significant nuances for the role listed in verses 8-10. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin define these selected words:

“Worthy of Respect” suggests that deacons are to be serious minded men whose character merits respect . . . “not double-tongued” refers primarily to controlling speech. The deacon is not to spread rumors to different groups of listeners. . . . The prohibition against indulging “in much wine” forbids the love of alcohol. . . . The deacon is to avoid the temptations of materialism by “not pursuing dishonest gain.” . . . He is not to develop a questionable integrity by not currying favors for mercenary ends. . . . Christian leaders are to exhibit proper doctrinal and moral response to Christ’s message. . . . The “deep truths” of the faith are teachings once hidden but now revealed. . . . To have a “clear conscience,” a Christian leader must give continual obedience to God’s truth as revealed in Scripture. . . . After the experience of “testing,” those who had “nothing against them” served as deacons. The word translated “nothing against them” is a synonym for “above reproach” of 3:2 and signifies someone against whom no specific charge of wrongdoing can be laid.⁷⁷

In verse 11, the text seemingly breaks away from the qualities of a male deacon and instead moves to address the identity and qualities of a female partner in ministry using the Greek work *γυνηκας*, which has been translated as “women,” “women helpers,” and as simply, “wives.” There is no lack of discussion on the identity and nature of Paul’s introduction of or use of this particular word, but for the sake of this study I side with the interpretation that Paul is describing the deacon’s wife (if he is married) who will share in his ministry of service. William Mounce summarizes what appears to be the most compelling arguments for the word *γυνηκας* to be interpreted as “wives”:

(1) It would be awkward to discuss deacons in 8-10, switch to a different topic in v 11, and then return to deacons in vv 12-13 without a textual clue that the topic has changed. This suggests that the topic has not changed. (2) Vv 11 and 12 develop the common theme of the deacon’s family; his wife must be blameless; he must be faithful in marriage; his children must be well-managed. These verses are thus dealing with the same topic and belong together. (3) B.B. Warfield suggests that v 10 is a semi-parenthetical explanation of v 9, v 11 follows closely on v 9, and v 11

⁷⁷Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 116-18.

assumes the verb *εχοντας*, “holding to,” from v 9: “The deacon must have the mystery of faith in a pure conscience—and must not be accepted until his life has shown this possession—and a wife, like him grave, and full of other virtues.” (4) If v 11 introduces a third office, one would expect more details, especially since women were so involved in the heresy. For example, in all three lists Paul raises the issue of marital infidelity (1 Tim 3:2; 12; Titus 1:6), and even in the case of widows (1 Tim 5:9). The problem is also dealt with in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 2:9; 5:2, 11, 15; 2 Tim 3:6-9), and in light of Paul’s readiness to repeat himself on this point, the omission of this qualification here is noteworthy. The requirements, if for a female deacon, are considerably lighter than for a male deacon, and this seems unlikely (unless Paul assumes vv 8-11, 13 carry over to the deaconess). It could be argued that Paul did not want to repeat himself, but he has already repeated himself extensively as a comparison of the two paragraphs in this chapter shows. (Yet the concluding *πιστας εν πασιν*, “faithful in all things,” may be Paul’s summary way of applying the qualities of a deacon to a deaconess.) (5) *γυνη* occurs in the very next verse where it must refer to the deacon’s wife (cf. 3:2). (6) Paul shows a readiness, both in the Pastoral Epistles and elsewhere, to create words to meet his needs. It would have been very easy for him to have written *τας διακονους* or perhaps *διακονισσας* and prevent what would be otherwise confusing if in fact he had changed topics. (7) It is significant that no clear references to the deaconess in the NT.⁷⁸

These “wives” were to have four particular qualities which align perfectly with the character of the deacon, who is her husband. These qualities are defined by George Knight:

The qualifications for the deacons’ wives, who are engaged with the deacons in diaconal service, are virtually synonymous with the qualification of the *διακονοι* (vs.8,9); *σεμνας* corresponds to *σεμνους, μη διαβολουσ to μη διαλογουσ, νηφαλιουσ to μη οινω πολλω προσεχοντας* and perhaps also *μη αισχροκερδεισ*, and finally *πιστις εν πασιν* to the entirety of v.9 . . . *διαβολος . . .* is “malicious gossips . . . *νηφαλιουσ . . .* is “temperate in the use of alcoholic beverages, sober, clear-headed, self-controlled” . . . *πιστας εν πασιν . . .* is “trustworthy, faithful, or dependable” . . . the wives of deacons must be as committed and serious as their husbands, as in control of their tongues and attitudes, as self-controlled and as faithful, for them to be responsible laborers with their husbands.⁷⁹

The text then returns to address the life and character of the male deacon with respect to his fidelity to his wife and also to his role as the manager of his home. Philip Towner explains,

Deacons are to be faithful to their wives (a “one-woman man,” 3:2; Titus 1:6). They must also exhibit skillful management in the household. The elements of household management mentioned first in 3:4 are shortened and given in reversed

⁷⁸Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 203.

⁷⁹George K. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 172-73.

order. The order “let them manage their children and households well,” distinguishes between offspring and slaves, suggesting that the deacons, like the overseers, were (generally) householders, people of means and position in the social structure. The concern for this management ability suggests that deacons carried out significant leadership duties in service to the overseer, or perhaps (if overseers supervised a cluster of house churches in a locality) on a par with the overseers but in a more limited sphere (the house church).⁸⁰

The virtue list requirement of fidelity in marriage for the deacon is one that has received much attention because of the nature of the term translated “one-woman man.” This particular quality is one which is required of elders (Titus 1), overseers (1 Tim 3), and of deacons (also 1 Tim 3) and seems to be a most reasonable requirement for those who aspire to leadership and who are married.⁸¹ The statement of marriage fidelity does not require that an overseer or deacon be married (neither Paul nor Timothy would have qualified), rather it lays out a very simple but profound guideline for those who are seeking to serve who are married. In the context of Ephesians, it may have been a setting in which the apostle Paul wanted to elevate the God-given institution of marriage in the face of opponents who were talking down the value or necessity of marriage. In any case, the nature of a “one-woman man” has been defined in varied ways. Lea and Griffin summarize the predominant views:

The NIV translation that the overseer (and deacon) be “the husband of but one wife” implies that Paul was prohibiting polygamy among the overseers. Such a practice would be so palpably unacceptable among Christians that it would hardly seem necessary to prohibit it. . . . Some have felt that Paul was demanding that the overseer be a married man. However, Paul’s own singleness (1 Cor 7:7-8) and his positive commendation of the single state (1 Cor 7:1,32-35) would seem to allow a single man to serve as a church leader. Others have felt that the passage rules out remarriage if a first wife dies, but Paul clearly permitted second marriages in other passages (1 Tim 5:14; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Cor 7:39). . . . Another interpretation is to understand Paul to have prohibited a divorced man from serving as a church leader. While this can be Paul’s meaning, the language is too general in its statement to make this interpretation certain. Some evangelical New Testament scholars suggest that there are New Testament passages that appear to permit divorce (Matt 19:9; 1

⁸⁰Philip Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 267.

⁸¹See appendix 1 for a summary of office qualities from 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1.

Cor 7:15). . . . Had Paul clearly meant to prohibit divorce, he could have said it unmistakably by using the Greek word for divorce (*απολω*, cf. Matt 1:19).⁸²

I would join those who would say that the life of a man before conversion is not to be held against his opportunity to be considered for church office. On the other hand I hold that the Scriptures do provide a basis for divorce (abandonment, infidelity) and so allow for a remarriage that does not disqualify a candidate for ministry service. All biblical criteria will also be brought alongside this man's life, but the fact of having been divorced or having divorced does not automatically terminate what should be a necessary inquiry into the details and effects of that experience.

First Timothy 3 is unique from the previous texts looked at in the sense that more specifics are gained from Paul's writing concerning the character of the primary leader (the overseer/elders) as well as the men who will be partnered together with him (the deacons) in cultivating the community of faith. A crisis is seen in the Exodus and Numbers passage which called forth the need for other leaders to help shoulder the burdens. In Matthew, it is the will of the Father that Jesus select and call to Himself twelve men to whom He would give authority to duplicate the powerful actions and distribute the message as He had been proclaiming. In Acts the crisis of the Greek-speaking widows is recounted, which necessitated the appointment of seven community-selected men to take charge and solve the need so that the apostles could maintain their Lord-given priorities. In I Timothy 3:1-13 there is the clear description of the primary human leader among the church body, the overseer/elder, and also the clear call for the partner in ministry (and his wife, if married). This two-part leadership team is both dynamic and biblical in all of the reviewed passages. The circumstances vary within each of the case studies but the priority of each role seems to be evident. The primary leadership role is one that prioritizes their spiritual connection with God for the overall benefit of the community. The secondary role is one that lives both spiritually and with

⁸²Lea and Griffin, *1,2 Timothy, Titus*, 109-10.

integrity but has the priority of taking on responsibilities for services that impact the physical life of the church as it grows and changes in a variety of tangible ways. This is simply necessary because of the human limitations that are a part of every primary leader's life. He cannot nor is he expected to do ministry alone. He either learns this through crisis or embraces it from the beginning through the intentional discipleship of the men within the fellowship he is overseeing. As Paul desired that this kind of interaction become intentional he wrote, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the qualities of both the overseers and of the deacons who would serve together. With these qualities defined and at work in the heart of each man serving, the church will hear, respond, and adapt to any and all circumstances in which the gospel is preached and bearing fruit.

CHAPTER 3
THE SOCIOLOGICAL AND SUPPORTING BASIS FOR
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR
PROSPECTIVE DEACONS

In this chapter, five significant qualities of a successful and healthy deacon ministry are identified and agreement among the prevalent writings on the necessity of these qualities are demonstrated. These five qualities—partnership, efficiency, delegation, responsiveness, and integrity—were identified as a result of the exegetical review of five selected biblical passages examined in chapter 2. The events described in these passages speak to an unfolding reality of identifying spiritual leadership within the people of God. My goal is to review a body of literature from various Christian traditions that speak to the nature and role of deacons and then show how these five qualities are to be embraced by any church seeking to develop biblical servants in that context.

**Partnership: Healthy Organization
and a Shared Vision**

The Scriptures describe God as a community of persons (Gen 1:1, 26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa 6:8, 48:16, 61:1; Matt 3:16-17, 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14), which is eventually defined within systematic theology as a Trinity.¹ Within this tri-unity is an identifiable separateness and yet an inseparable oneness which is rightly referred to as “God.” Each of the three members comprising this unity is referred to in distinct ways and also in mutually affirmed roles. This brief theological introduction is necessary to provide a foundational analogy of thought as believers consider the nature of particular leaders whom God calls to carry out specified tasks before Him. The selected biblical passages

¹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 332-38.

previously reviewed in chapter 2 give clear evidence that primary leaders are not meant to serve alone. Spiritual leaders experience challenges either within themselves or in the carrying out of their commission that lead them to either seek help from God, or to choose to share a portion of their overall ministry. This resulted in a kind of “team” relationship in which the primary leader was assisted by others who were brought into the circumstances, not to replace or supplant that leader, but rather to share in the demands of these circumstances. This relationship or partnership came into being (Exod 18:24-26; Num 11:24-25; Acts 6:5-6) so that the primary leader(s) could live with priorities that the growth and the necessary development of the mission demanded. This partnership can be clearly observed in the joining of pastors and deacons (1 Tim 3). These servants who are brought alongside the primary leader are not to be viewed as minions or hired help but rather are equipped by God to actually advance the mission in accord with that leader. These servants who are brought alongside the primary leader are not viewed as lesser or in some way deficient, but rather equipped to do the task equal to the manner in which the primary leader previously served. Charles Deweese agrees:

The good news of the Bible contradicts this low concept of the deaconship and affirms that the office of deacon is full ministry in its own right. The New Testament does not divide into grades of importance those Christians who serve God and the church. Not only does Scripture place deacons in a work of service; it also treats them as exemplary models of servanthood for all the other church members.²

These servants are brought into the life of the primary leader so that a percentage of the necessary tasks which comprise the mission are carried out together as equals, but being different. The role of a deacon is just such a calling for mature Christian men to partner with other Christian men who have been identified as bishops, elders, or shepherds. In the context of the local community of believers there exists the need for spiritual leadership that prioritizes the study of the Scriptures and guidance, as well as the need for

²Charles W. Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacon* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1979), 62.

selected individuals who will assist the pastor in the compassionate address of needs in the congregation. The varied priorities of these two different men does not make one more necessary than the other as both are essential for growing a spiritually healthy and productive church. Thabiti M. Anyabwile agrees:

The Lord has not established the office of deacon as an extra to the church. The office does not exist as some obsolete appendage. Rather, deacons serve the table of the Lord in order to facilitate the advance of the gospel, the health of the body,³ and the rejoicing of the saints. Deacons are indispensable in the Christian church.³

Some churches do not elevate the necessity of qualified men to serve with the pastor in the care of the local fellowship. Over time though, the effects of a fallen world, or the normal challenges of finances, health, and comfort would eventually be made known to that pastor. The increasing knowledge of both spiritual and physical concerns would inevitably require the pastor to serve with the weight of both kinds of needs. This choice to balance the variety of concerns eventually weakens the effectiveness of the pastor's primary role of the teacher of the Scriptures and the one who is to seek God's guidance for the overall community. Alexander Strauch warns of this circumstance:

Unfortunately, many churches and their leaders are uncertain about the need for deacons. Some churches don't even have deacons. Yet the church shepherds today desperately need the deacons to relieve them from the many practical care needs essential to shepherding a flock so that the shepherds can attend more fully to preaching, guarding, and leading the whole flock.⁴

As a pastor is overwhelmed, it then becomes clear to both pastor and church family that there is a need to qualify and call for other men, of equal heart and love for the Lord, to whom the physical concerns can be shared. There is no thought of choosing lesser men or to look for Christian men who seem to have little to do. This would not be consistent with the pastor's recognition that the ministry to the believer's spirit is equally as important as the showing of concern for the believer's body and circumstances. To view

³Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, IXMarks Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 43.

⁴Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon: Minister of Mercy* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 2005), 12.

either of these two realities as lesser would be to deny the fact of one's two-part existence, body and soul. Rosalind Brown comments on the privilege and benefits of a truly pastoral deacon ministry:

Diaconal ministry is essentially hopeful. If we do not hope with the assurance that our God comes to save, we might as well not bother. In pastoral ministry we may need to cultivate our ability to hope, since it does not always come naturally. Hope and godly creativity often go hand in hand, because creativity is linked to the ability to envisage a different future and to work towards it beyond the boundaries of the present situation. God is always doing a new thing, always making all things new, and diaconal pastoral ministry takes its vision from that.⁵

If the pastor fails to maintain diligent study of the Word and the necessary time to speak of God's guidance for the church, then there will be the expectation of the members that this spiritual role has been transferred to the deacons. If the deacons fail to take the initiative to learn and respond to the physical concerns and burdens of the church body, then that body will naturally turn to the pastor to provide this needed service. This is a recipe for spiritual demise and either burnout or conflict will take its toll on the church until it simply closes the front door for good. The nature of this partnership or teamwork is that both players recognize the absolute necessity of diligent service in their respective areas so as not to cause the other to experience frustration and failure.⁶ These undesirable circumstances will be avoided easily when both pastor and deacon invest time and attention in developing the kind of working relationship that true partners in the ministry ought to share. Ken Hemphill writes,

We as pastors must take responsibility for educating the churches on the biblical patterns for deacon ministry. . . . The deacons and the pastor must become colleagues in ministry, working together to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the congregation. God designed the deacon ministry to provide for the nurturing of the growing congregation.⁷

⁵Rosalind Brown, *Being a Deacon Today* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2005), 69.

⁶Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 229-30.

⁷Ken Hemphill, *The Official Rule Book for the New Church Game* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 186.

The relationship between pastor and deacon is a partnership and thus not simply the exercise of a boss to an employee. In this relationship there may be the sharing of necessary responsibilities and yet be the absence of mutual honor, respect, and value. The boss is the Lord Jesus Christ—that particular office has already been eternally filled. In His plan for His people, God has personally indwelt each believer in the person of the Holy Spirit and as a result has equipped each for service to Him and to each other. The identification of pastors and deacons is thus the evidence of the Spirit’s exercise of His power, under the direction of the Lord Jesus, to provide tangible earthly guidance and compassion for His people. He wants His loving presence and guidance to always have “skin” or a physical touchable quality about it. He does this for His people in providing the partnership of pastors and deacons. Robert E. Naylor describes the benefit of this partnership:

The things which the deacon is to do are things which still belong to the area of pastoral leadership. In the performance of these duties, however, God has created another officer that assumes the detailed execution which would absorb the pastor’s thought, time, and life. . . . There is no freedom like the freedom of perfect confidence in another. . . . Surely the strongest pastor in the world is that man who has absolute faith in God and absolute faith in the men given to him of God for the execution and enlargement of his ministry.⁸

As these men serve together in love, mutual honor, and respect for each other, a blessed supply of resources are available to address the totality of needs which may exist in a given church family. This kind of synergy between a pastor and a deacon sets the tone for the other varied roles to be exercised within the church family.⁹ As the church witnesses the embrace of biblical commonness and unity among spiritual partners there is a contagious desire to identify how they can also be joined together in identifying and advancing the mission. This healthy relating between pastors and deacons causes a thirst

⁸Robert E. Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon: From a Pastor with a Special Heart for Deacons* (Nashville: Broadman, 1955), 10.

⁹Howard B. Foshee, *Now That You’re a Deacon* (Nashville: Broadman, 1975), 27.

in the membership for learning all that is common in Christ, and yet an equal desire to know what particular ministry they have been called to exercise. This partnership is the compounding of the blessing of a biblical model of leadership which maximizes both commonness at the core and yet separateness with respect to roles. In Exodus 14, Moses, God's man, is provided with necessary assistance to carrying out his responsibilities. This partnership resulted in the development of additional partnerships that eventually became an efficient legal system to serve the entire community. The power of partnership in these circumstances cannot be underestimated nor denied. The benefits of a partnership of qualified individuals can also be seen in the service of pastor and deacons. Alexander Strauch describes this critical partnership in the Acts 6 dilemma:

The Apostle's plan called for the formation of a body of seven men to whom they could hand over the responsibility for the widows' care. . . . The apostles knew that the task demanded skilled men of high moral character who could be trusted to fulfill the responsibilities with integrity and ability. The wrong men could create worse problems and frustrate the apostles even more than the existing situation.¹⁰

Efficiency: Maximizing the Efforts of Every Leader

One of the amazing realities of the history of God's people and of His presence among them is that some tasks He takes on personally and others He chooses to share. When He chooses to select someone to lead out on accomplishing a God-sized task it is not that He cannot do the task, or that He is looking for another god-like person who is qualified for the task, rather His desire seems to be to display His power and goodness in the midst of the task. If God feels that something should be done it is already clear that this task will in fact be done. An additional by-product of God's decision to commission a particular task is the certainty of His guidance on how the task is to be carried out. With the commission God predictably provides the particular direction as to how to see His will carried out to completion. This significant piece of information helps the leader provide direction and clarity when explaining and organizing those who will be involved

¹⁰Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, 29-30.

or impacted by the mission. The fact that there is a designated leader is a gift in itself for it answers the question of who is primarily in charge to see that the mission is carried out. When the leader's role is conducted properly, the varied persons of the project or ministry identify where they can make the greatest contribution. This is the means to healthy delegation while still allowing the primary leader to maintain responsibility.

Herbster and Howerton comment,

Both the pastor and the deacons must realize, however, that the pastor remains accountable to the Lord, to the deacons, and to the congregation for the work of the ministry. True, he should delegate some responsibilities. When he delegates a responsibility he must give the authority to get the job done. But he cannot delegate away his accountability for the work of the ministry.¹¹

The discussion around the table of those serving together is not to determine who is the most important or who will get the most credit when the initiative is successfully completed. This kind of unproductive conversation is debilitating no matter where it takes place in the timeline of working together. With respect to the ministry of the

Church, Gary Straub and James Trader III concur,

Paul says that "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (I Cor. 12:7, 26). Support of the individual members of the body is vital. This should not be interpreted as a command to think the same or agree on every issue. It does not mean all must necessarily enjoy one another's company or be best friends, but it does mean that we must respect everyone's gifts and the work that we each do."¹²

Role confusion slows down the productive pace of any project simply because participating members are serving with an attitude of reservation and disunity. This virus within an organization like the ministry between pastors and deacons will make the opportunity to serve the church together both spiritually stressful, disagreeable, and

¹¹Carl Herbster and Kenneth Howerton, *Pastors and Deacons: Servants Working Together* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 2010), 112.

¹²Gary Straub and James Trader III, *Your Calling as a Deacon* (Atlanta: Chalice, 2005), 46.

operationally ineffective.¹³ On the other hand, when there is a full embrace of the value and necessity of both roles within the life of the church leadership, then there will be a clear purpose, a Spirit-filled power, a healthy partnership, and a defined system of responding to needs. Robert E. Naylor agrees,

A deacon that gets harnessed properly to God's Spirit and his program and purpose is a force to be reckoned with. If all the deacons in all the churches could be possessed with a conviction that God had something for them to do and say, if they could have a sense of responsibility to meet and of being men of the hour for God, it would turn the world upside down.¹⁴

In Numbers 11, Moses reached a point in his life personally where the needs of the people whom God had called him to lead became too much for him to handle. God's solution was to join selected and empowered leaders to assist in the work. This sharing of the burden not only eased Moses' concern but also demonstrated to the people that God can empower other people at any level to fill a role which is necessary to the carrying out of the mission. The designation of additional leaders was not meant to be a negative evidence of Moses' incompetency but rather a clear address to the very fact of Moses' humanity. The simple fact is that the task that God gave Moses to carry out was one which would require the addition of many other leaders to accomplish. This account finds resonance in the need to embrace spiritual partnerships between the primary leader and those joined to him by God. Anne Stuckey writes,

A pastor may have a well-defined vision for the ministry of the congregation, but if the leadership team doesn't share that mission, then either overt or passive-aggressive conflict is sure to ensue. When vision for ministry or mission is established, all members of the leadership team must be willing to agree to the direction and advocate for it in the congregation.¹⁵

¹³James Kirkland, *Elders and Deacons and Saints, Oh My! Defining Biblical Roles, Structure, and Organization for a Team Ministry that Achieves the Fivefold Purpose of the Church* (Bloomington, IN: Crossbooks, 2011), 107.

¹⁴Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon*, 20.

¹⁵Anne Stuckey, *Training Ministry Teams: A Manual for Elders and Deacons* (St. Paul, MN: Faith & Life, 2004), 83.

This reality should both encourage primary leaders to clearly identify when the task has outstretched them and also welcome the identification and appointment of other spirit-filled leaders to share the vision with. James M. Boice adds weight to this observation:

There is no reference anywhere in the New Testament to the appointment of only one elder or one deacon to a work. We would tend to appoint one elder, but God's wisdom is greater than our own at this point. In appointing several persons to work together, the church at God's direction provided for the mutual encouragement among those who shared in the work as well as lessened the chance for pride and tyranny in office.¹⁶

Delegation: The Intentional Sharing of Tasks

Delegation by definition automatically assumes that a primary leader is carrying out tasks which are inherently meant to be carried out by someone else. As the roles of both pastor and deacon are clearly defined, the challenge then moves to the necessary assessment of whether or not a particular task is to be carried out by one or the other. This can be somewhat difficult because there is a definite commonness in qualifications and capabilities. Ireland notes,

The word *deacon* does not reference a particular technical function within the church. It does, however, point to a significant role and placement of honor upon one who diligently helps with the administrative and social responsibilities of the church toward its mission and purpose.¹⁷

The overarching desire for both offices is that the identified goals for the ministry are successfully achieved. Once these goals are established, a clear assessment needs to be made with respect to helping each role to serve in an efficient manner. In delegation is the obvious existence of the delegator. For a variety of reason someone must possess aspects of a particular role or task in order to share with someone else. First, the primary leader is the one used by God to oversee and identify direction for the ministry or organization. This reality means that the primary leader functions with the

¹⁶James M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 632.

¹⁷David D. Ireland, *The Ministry of the Deacon* (Montclair, NJ: Impact, 2004), 11.

essential DNA for the ultimate development of the organization. He may also possess the necessary competency to see it develop into that which he has been led to facilitate.

Gene Getz strongly agrees,

It's God's design—from the time He chose men like Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Nehemiah in the Old Testament, and Peter, Paul, Timothy and Titus in the New Testament—to always have a key leader in place to lead His people. Why would we think differently when it involves elders/overseers in a local church? Those who respond to this question by explaining that a proper view of “spiritual” gifts makes it possible to function as a leadership team without a primary leader must also explain why there are no references to spiritual “gifts” in the qualifications for elders/overseers in the Pastoral Epistles.¹⁸

This primary leader, if humble, recognizes that the vision is in fact a stewardship from God. He has been given a vision from God with the expectation that his role is not to carry out the mission completely on his own but rather to exercise his given competencies to help others join the journey of faith also. Delegation is far more than just a good thing to do. It is an obedient choice to make. It is the task of pastors to oversee the ministry in such a way that deacons can also maximize their office and spiritual giftedness. To fail to delegate is to destine the vision to failure. Strauch notes the effect of poor leadership:

If shepherds provide poor pastoral leadership for the church, they will frustrate the deacons. Deacons are often strong and influential men who care deeply about the people's welfare. Sometimes deacons are more competent and aggressive than overseers. They get things done. They work hard. . . . In extreme cases, the shepherds' neglect in directing and encouraging the deacons may cause the diaconate to cease functioning altogether.¹⁹

Missions or initiatives given by God seem to all have in them a definite percentage which is to be shared by others in order to be accomplished. The leader who holds onto aspects of the mission too long or stubbornly refuses to allow others to share in the ministry demonstrates a “pastoral elitism” and is predicting either the diminished

¹⁸Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 223.

¹⁹Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, 78.

effectiveness of the God-given vision or may even contribute to its outright failure.²⁰ The setting for healthy delegation is in the context of clear communication, mutual respect for the roles, and humility in the hearts of those to whom it is being delegated. It also includes an attitude of appreciation in the primary leader that communicates great worth to all who are walking through the process. Delegation is a celebration of godly wisdom and of the Holy Spirit's presence when both the pastor and deacons both embrace it.

Daniel Baker affirms,

Elders (pastors) and deacons are thus to complement one another, not to be held in opposition to one another. The submission of deacons to elders is not because elders are fundamentally more important or superior. It is rather for the sake of the health of Christ's church, to create an environment of order, life, and growth . . . neither is to covet the gifts or callings of the other, but both are to walk in a diligent faithfulness to their calling because God himself has given it.²¹

Delegation is not the transfer of tasks that no one wants to do any longer. If the tasks being delegated were not really valuable and necessary to the health of the organization then they should have been discontinued long ago. If the only time a primary leader delegates a task is when he is sick of it, this attitude will be transferred to the deacon, along with the task. Over time, the flawed sharing of these tasks will eventually come back to the primary leader but in a much worse shape than when they were delegated. This manner of delegation usually costs time, money, members, and the strength of a mutually respectful relationship between pastor and deacons. Biblical delegation is the serious choice of the primary leader to focus his life and energies more specifically by entrusting necessary tasks to other men who will carry them with equal appreciation and faithfulness. Biblical delegation is the wise choice of the primary leader to trust God to sustain what He has brought into being by the necessary development of the two biblical roles of pastor and deacon. Benjamin Merkle refers to this in his review

²⁰Glenn C. Daman, *Developing Leaders for the Small Church: A Guide to Spiritual Transformation for the Church Board* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 182.

²¹Daniel Baker, *Deacons: Serving God, Serving God's People* (Apex, NC: CreateSpace, 2011), 23.

of the emerging role of deacons in the early church:

The office of the Christian deacon does not have a close parallel to leaders found in either Jewish or Greek society. The seven men chosen in Acts 6, while not specifically called deacons, provide the closest parallel to the Christian office. Just as the Seven were needed to attend to the physical needs of the Greek-speaking widows, so deacons are needed to look after the physical needs of the church. By being responsible for the oversight of such concerns, the deacons allow the elders to focus their efforts on attending to the spiritual needs of the congregation.²²

In the gospel of Matthew there is an account of Jesus commissioning his disciples to speak and conduct themselves in the likeness of His own ministry. Jesus is no ordinary leader and the disciples were not extraordinary men. The plan of the Father included not only the empowerment of Jesus to teach and perform signs and miracles of healing, but also that He should entrust select men to declare His message and do as He had done. In this scenario, the disciples would have been both embarrassed and discredited in the eyes of the people had Jesus not prepared them as He did. Delegation on the scale that Jesus exercised was no small act and neither is the act of biblical delegation within the church of God. W. A. Criswell speaks for unleashing deacons for outreach:

He is a wise and Spirit-led pastor who seeks out deacon leadership for the church that will bless the families of the flock and be actively engaged in visitation—soul winning. . . . To follow in support of our shepherd's desire to see the Gospel of Christ taken to everyone in our city.²³

Jesus is not a parallel with the pastor but He is the primary leader in the Matthew account and He is delegating the words and works which He Himself had done alone for a period of time. His care to both authorize and inform them of what they would experience on His behalf is similar to the choice any pastoral leader makes when sharing the ministry. Allen L. Elder affirms,

²²Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 232.

²³W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guide for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980), 135.

Before His ascension, Jesus gave one all-inclusive order to his followers. We call this order the Great Commission. Within this order or commandment is the basic mission of the church and of each Christian. The mission is to make disciples or followers of Christ from every ethnic people group on earth. Deacons should join with pastors in leading the way for everyone in the church to be engaged in the ministry of multiplying disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴

The delegation of tasks or responsibilities within the church setting lies in being sure that the deacons have the proper authority to share in the caring and outreach aspects of the ministry. Church duties of both pastors and deacons are normally spelled out in some detail within the founding documents of the church but other tasks fall between these descriptions that require clear communication between the pastor and deacons. For the primary overseer who wants to excel in delegation and watch God-called men succeed in their delegated tasks as deacons, clear instructions are required. It is in this delegation that others are able to see visible examples of what it means to follow Christ and humbly and obediently imitate Him. Owen F. Cummings powerfully states,

The deacon is the icon of what all in the church are invited to become. The ordained are asked by the church to embody and manifest the diaconate of Christ. The ordained deacon is authorized by the assembly of the church to manifest in his person and ministry the diaconate of Christ. Why? So that the assembly may see in their local deacon, living and serving among them, what they themselves are summoned to become.²⁵

Responsiveness: Organizing for Prompt Action

When there is a healthy sense of partnership, operational efficiency, and wise and informative delegation, there will be agility in addressing areas which need the attention of the deacon ministry. The purpose and role of the deacon is found in the actual meaning of the Greek word *διακονος* from which the office title comes. The word actually means “through the dust” and may have been derived describing the work of one who served others and was always moving from one place to another in the setting of

²⁴Allen L. Elder, *Ministering as a Deacon: Applying the Great Commission to the Deacon Ministry* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2013), 31.

²⁵Owen F. Cummings, *Deacons and the Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2004), 28.

service. The word is not a demeaning word but one which is used to describe Jesus Himself, the apostles, pastors, as well as all believers. Daniel Baker summarizes,

The New Testament's twenty-nine occurrences (of διακονος) bear this out, as in Matthew 20:26, "whoever would be great among you must be your servant." Far from rare in the New Testament, the words related to the root word "serve" are found more than sixty times in the New Testament...Christ himself is called a "deacon" in Romans 15:8, "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised." Apollos and Paul are called "servants [deacons] through whom you believed" in 1 Corinthians 3:5.²⁶

The servant model is not one readily seen in American culture, but it was a common sight in the Roman Empire. The servant in the household might have been the most educated person and possessed the responsibility of managing wealthy homes and finances.²⁷ He was not a servant in the home or business because he had no value but in fact the opposite would be true. To serve the master well and to display reliability and faithfulness was to be entrusted with more responsibility and to receive great honor. The title of deacon is one that seems to have been selected per the nature of the service that deacons are expected to perform. Whereas the primary task of the pastor is to "keep watch" over (Heb 13:7) the congregation, his role then is to lead spiritually, provide spiritual food, and overlook the flock with protective spiritual awareness.²⁸ These actions and duties call for him to be responsive to the spiritual needs within the life of the "flock." On the other hand, the flock is not immune from circumstances with impact individual believers' health, finances, vocation, and property and ultimately, their faith. The task of responding to these needs in a timely fashion demonstrates that they are worthy of attention and resources. When Jesus said that it is love for each other that distinguishes the church in the eyes of the world, He meant that believers are to truly seek each other's

²⁶Baker, *Deacons*, 12.

²⁷Jeannine E. Olsen, *Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 21.

²⁸Daman, *Developing Leaders*, 21.

highest interests, whether spiritual or physical. When a church family embraces this priority and the pastor and deacons fully realize the cooperative nature of the two offices all will feel the love of God toward each other.²⁹ Henry Webb agrees,

As Jesus commissioned the disciples as partners in his caring ministry, deacons can be partners with their pastor in caring for people. Deacons will naturally feel inadequate, but that inadequacy leads to a healthy dependence on God's strength. . . . With the power of the presence of God's Holy Spirit, deacons can be effective partners with God and the pastor (I Cor. 3:9) in caring for families.³⁰

Believers are all servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and should serve Him and love Him with an identical love by serving His sheep, His flock, His people. This service and ministry is to be particularly characterized by a pastor-deacon partnership that lives in spiritual preparedness each and every day. Stephen A. Macchia emphasizes the necessity of being in tune with the Holy Spirit:

We cannot perform our leadership responsibilities in our own strength, power, or wisdom. Leadership means that we know how to follow the Leader and rely fully on His power to guide and direct our every step. Our most significant resource for becoming an effective leader is the Holy Spirit's influence on our daily life and service. Servant leadership is impossible without a life of full submission to the love and Lordship of Christ.³¹

When believers love one another promptly, the reduced perception is that the institution has become far more important than the persons being served. This kind of response happens when the deacons know to what extent they are authorized to serve and from what resources they are entrusted to draw from. The wise pastor fully embraces the compassionate care ministry of the deacons and is not threatened by the fact that they play significant roles within the lives of the church members. The pastor is to give himself to providing rich biblical teaching for the members and can do this with greater

²⁹J. D. O'Donnell, *Handbook for Deacons* (Nashville: Randall House, 1973), 55-56.

³⁰Henry Webb, *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 80.

³¹Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 122.

effectiveness if not also bearing the sole concern of the personal needs of the congregation. In Acts 6, the early church is recorded to have experienced a teachable moment. The text shows primary leaders and spiritual priorities being identified, and the delegation of necessary tasks. In the quick expansion of the church it was inevitable that some needs would be overlooked or neglected. One of these areas of need required that other believing men confront the apostles with the inconsistency between the claim to love each other and the plight of the Greek-speaking widows. This complaint was the means by which the issue surfaced. Chappell comments,

Our tendency is to view problems as a signal that the church is defunct, and certainly they can be indicators of needed adjustments. Notice, however, that the problems in the Jerusalem church arose when the “number of disciples was multiplied”. It was the growth of the church—not its insufficiency—that necessitated a solution.³²

The apostles were made aware of the fact that the Greek-speaking Jewish widows were not receiving the regular allotment of food that the Hebrew-speaking Jewish widows were. The injustice required no serious investigation and the apostles responded humbly and wisely to address the need. Their next decision was to call for the congregation of believers to select seven men whom they could appoint as overseers of this necessary ministry. There is no description of the time it took from when the need was voiced to this commissioning service but the text would suggest that it did not take very long at all. This kind of agility and responsiveness happens when primary leaders know their role and recognize the value and necessity of the partnering role in ministering to the total needs of the people. Alexander Strauch describes the impact of a clearly called and commissioned deaconate:

Through the deacons, the local church’s charitable activities are effectively organized and centralized. The deacons are collectors of funds, distributors of relief, and agents of mercy. They help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the elderly, the homeless, the shut-in, the refugees, and the disabled. They counsel

³²Paul Chappell, *The Ministry of a Baptist Deacon: A Handbook for the Local Church Servant Leaders* (Lancaster, CA: Strong Together, 2010), 7.

and guide people. They visit people in their homes. They relieve suffering. They comfort, protect, and encourage people, and help to meet their needs. In contemporary language, they are the congregation's social workers.³³

Integrity: The Elevation of Both Private and Public Virtues

The role of a pastor or deacon is a blend of Spirit leadership and the God-given desire to serve the Lord Jesus and His people. The Scripture passages reviewed in chapter 2 have revealed that there is a particular work of God in choosing primary leaders and an equally overseen process of recognizing other leaders to share in the work with them. The identity of each of the primary leaders is significant and the Bible authors spend time examining or defining the character of the men. Scripture also provides some basis for the selection of the supporting church leaders also. The conduct of a man matters in the selection of both pastors and deacons and the church that disregards this priority will do so with regrets.³⁴ The goal for spiritual leadership is not perfection, otherwise only Jesus would qualify. On the other hand, the spiritual leader needs to wear the righteousness of God by faith no matter what place in biblical history he is destined to serve. Old Testament leaders like Moses were given the privilege of speaking directly with God after the Lord had established that the journey would be equivalent to walking on holy ground. In both Exodus 18 and Numbers 11, those selected to serve with Moses had particular qualities such as the fact that they were "elders" or aged and respected tribal leaders. Others were not only elders but they enjoyed the impartation of the Holy Spirit and gave public evidence that He would be providing specific guidance and influence upon their decision-making. Jesus called his selected follower "disciples" or "learners" and would not only teach them but also let them taste of the Spirit-empowered ministry that He lived when He commissioned them in Matthew 10.

In Acts 6, the apostles delegated a significant ministry addressing Greek-

³³Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, 156.

³⁴Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons*, 71.

speaking widows to seven men who are identified as believers “of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom.” Though each passage does not provide all the information about the primary leader or supporting leaders, it is clear that God selected men who He assessed as faithful and to whom He could share His vision. If this is true for God’s selection, how much more should the church be intentional in the processes of identifying and commissioning both pastors and deacons? What is the necessity of integrity in the life of a leader? Why set in place qualities which some men will aspire to and others will not? Why not make every man a leader simply because he is a believer and has the Holy Spirit within him? Well, a simple answer to these questions and many others like them would be that God desires to honor men who know Him and who also know the kind of conduct that honors Him. In 1 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, pens a virtue list for both bishops (overseers) and deacons which could be viewed as an exclusionary tool to simply disqualify men from service. A more accurate view would suggest that this was not entirely Paul’s intention. The qualities were provided to identify the kind of leadership which would be most effective in the ministry of the church in the roles of both the bishop and deacon. The appointing of spiritual leaders in a real sense predicts the journey ahead for each individual church. Baker affirms,

A church officer’s example will profoundly shape the spirituality of the church. As Old Testament kings and priests unavoidably impacted the spiritual life of the people under their care, as fathers have a power shaping influence on their children, so deacons and elders by their examples will be formative for the church. . . . If our generation holds up deficient models then we set up the next generation to be weaker, more worldly, and without any real impact on the fallen world around them.³⁵

This virtue list is meant to have more of a prescriptive effect, encouraging candidates, than a punitive effect, disqualifying candidates. The fact of the matter is that any virtue list is going to have one or both effects. The attitude with which one examines the list of virtues determines whether it will elevate or defeat the aspirations of the men in the congregation to serve. The apostle Paul commissioned Timothy to delegate the ministry

³⁵Baker, *Deacons*, 43-44.

to other men and this list was necessary in helping with this process. From a study of the context of 1 Timothy, there appears to have been a corrupt pattern of selecting leaders who did not exhibit holy conduct nor displayed God-honoring character. The virtue list provided by Paul addresses several aspects of a man's life and character. First, his personal reputation as a Christian man ought to be free of accusations which would cause distrust in the church as to his conduct. His life is not to be other than it appears to be but is in fact as he claims to be, a follower of Christ. He is not to be known as someone who lives out of control with respect to money, alcohol, or any substance which can either enslave him or impair his ability to be of a sound mind. Secondly, his spiritual life ought to be a clear profession of faith and a mature demonstration of what it means to live out a Christian life that has deep roots in the truth of God's Word. He is a man willing to minister and submit to the review of other men who examine his life and conduct. Thirdly, if married, he is to truly be devoted to the wife to whom he is covenanted and providing necessary instruction and guidance to his children. Furthermore, he is to competently oversee all that comprises his family and their belongings whether that includes the financial operation of the home and property, the choice to save or spend income, and plans to provide for future needs. The man of integrity has chosen to order his steps in obedience to the Lord and his faith permeates all his decisions and actions in life. When any student of the scriptures reviews the summarized qualifications of the deacon there is clear indication that this man is prepared to serve the Lord and His people because he has already been doing so. He is not an immature disciple or novice to the work but he understands the sacrifice experienced in serving those he loves.³⁶

These qualifications need to be stated regularly so that all men who hear them can be reminded of the kind of character and conduct God values and requires. This kind of man will gain an honorable reputation within the church family, which is only placed

³⁶Chappell, *The Ministry of a Baptist Deacon*, 23.

upon a man who has exercised his role in the attitude of a servant. It is an office free of earthly promotion, but is in fact the one that predicts the greatest honor in the eyes of his spiritual family members. This man, feeling this honor, is spurred to great boldness in the faith and in the work of the ministry as he senses God's favor upon his life and work on behalf of the saints. Richard Dresselhaus succinctly states,

Deacons are first people—created like everyone else in the image of God. They are people of God—dedicated to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And last, they are servants of Christ to carry on His work on this earth. They fit no mold, put on no airs, and create no images. They are simply people called of God to minister to the Church. They dare to be human, they fit in, they enjoy living, and they are regular people. Away with the all stereotyped notions of what deacons must appear to be that do not count. They are first and always God's choice doing what God wants. And that is enough—they can do nothing else.³⁷

³⁷Richard L. Dresselhaus, *Deacon Ministry: Empowering Volunteers* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 2012), 70.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This project consisted of developing a six-week curriculum for men and then teaching that curriculum to sixteen men identified as prospective deacons. The class was held at the church on six Sunday afternoons. The project included a Sunday morning introductory preaching series of three messages followed by the launch of a six-week, two-hour class offered on Sunday afternoons. The project included three different assessment tools that were instrumental in receiving beneficial feedback in the preparation and finalization of the curriculum.

Pre-Project Message Series

The timing of the final project, being situated at the first of the calendar year, provided me with the opportunity to preach a series of messages which have served to remind the church of our core values and beliefs. This year's adaption of these messages was titled "FOCUS" and was illustrated by the use of camera images and photography terms. These messages are used annually to remind the church concerning the core elements of our unity and to clarify both who we are and how we choose to function. The series of five messages included the nature of our conversion, the meaning of the signs of baptism and of communion, our identified biblical purposes, our beliefs as stated in the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, and finally the nature of our organization and leadership. It is this final message of the five that was used to introduce the church family to the mini-series of three project messages entitled "The Building Blocks of Shared Leadership." The message identified how our church is led by the Lord Jesus through the Word and Spirit but also surfaced the titles of both pastor and deacons as spiritual leaders. The messages were well-received by the church and a consistent flow of men approached me

with questions about the predicted study or to ask to participate in it. By the conclusion of the final message or soon after, sixteen men had approached me with a desire to be part of the six-week small group study. I personally met with each man and gave more specific information on what the class would be about and how it would challenge them to spiritual leadership even if not led or qualified to serve as a deacon. I informed them of the commitment necessary and of the questionnaire required both at the beginning and at the end of the study. It was stressed to these men that attendance was fully essential unless an emergency or work-related schedule change simply could not be avoided. All agreed to these requirements and committed to take time to pray and prepare their hearts for what God might say to them in the coming weeks.

Weeks 1-3

The project was designed to meet three goals. The first goal was to present a biblical basis for providing guidance to men who are prospective deacons. On three Sunday mornings, church members were presented with a series of sermons concerning the concept of shared leadership and the eventual formation of the role of deacon. This goal was measured by the completion of a rubric which the pastoral church staff and all active deacons (a total of six men) used to evaluate and provide feedback concerning the content of the sermons. The sermon content was evaluated but not the actual presentation of the sermon. The first two weeks of the project were used to finalize the sermon manuscripts, notes, and Power Point slides, and then to distribute copies of these drafts to the active pastoral staff and deacons. Each man was provided with a rubric with which to make an assessment of the stated title, content, supporting notes, and Power Point slides. After giving a period of time to review the sermon manuscripts, we met and they shared their impressions, offered suggestions, and generally affirmed the content in each message. This goal was successfully met when the evaluation by the pastors and deacons yielded at least a 90 percent sufficiency level for each indicator included in the rubric. A 90 percent

sufficiency implies that at least 90 percent of the ratings for each indicator were at the ‘satisfactory’ or above rating on the Likert scale.

Table 1. Evaluation summary of project messages rubric with six staff and deacon evaluators utilizing the 4-point Likert scale

Project Messages	Matt 10:1-12	Acts 6:1-7	1 Tim 3:8-13
Message Indicator 1: Biblical Faithfulness	3.73	3.9	3.9
Message Indicator 2: Methodology	3.13	3.6	3.5
Message Indicator 3: Applicability	3.67	3.7	3.73
Message Indicator 4: Visual Aids	3.8	3.8	3.77
Total Average Overall Likert Rating	3.6	3.8	3.725
Total % of each message receiving at least a satisfactory rating	90	95	93

The feedback from this group of evaluators can be summarized in four points:

First, questions arose on how the concept of shared leadership would be applied by the church at large when my primary application was to the role of spiritual leadership and that of a deacon. I welcomed this inquiry and explained my intent to also make accompanying application to how shared leadership is at work in our marriages, families, jobs, and of course, our church. In fact, by the end of the six sessions as we examined the teaching and virtue list from I Timothy, the men themselves expressed their awareness of how this concept was at the very root of biblical service to the Lord in the context of His church, but more so in just about every area of life and work. This explanation was satisfactory and a good discussion took place.

Second, there was a common sentiment that the three messages themselves required an additional weekend of introduction. This input was very helpful and caused me to fashion the message preceding the first project message with an introduction of terms and a clearer prediction of the purpose and tenor of the upcoming sermons.

Third, an impression was expressed within the group that I needed to challenge the men more up front to the commitment required to serve as a spiritual leader, such as a deacon. I agreed that there ought to be a serious-mindedness about the opportunity to serve but explained that the purpose for the six-week study was to invite men into the conversation about shared leadership. From their willingness to learn about God's pattern of using men this way, the call for service as it relates to the pastor-deacon relationship would be clearer. It was my anticipation that this clarity provided all the weight needed for them to feel the commitment required for service.

Fourth, several of my pastors and deacons requested more examples from my life to illustrate the primary points of the messages. I agreed to do this to a greater extent but expressed my desire that the biblical narratives provide the primary historical and biblical basis to be experienced and learned from. In any case, the messages included some of my own experiences along with others that I chose to insert within the six-week small group context. In many ways my illustrations from ministry life served as an illustration of how "not" to experience shared leadership benefits. This choice to speak about previous ministry failures proved fruitful in that my desire and motivation to focus on developing the concept of shared leadership within the life of our church family was more clearly identified.

Also included in these three weeks was the work of finalizing the six-week curriculum to be used in this project. The second goal of the project was to develop a six-week training curriculum that provided additional biblical information and more personal guidance to prospective deacons. This goal was measured by the completion of a rubric with which a select review group of active church members evaluated and provided feedback concerning the development of the six-week curriculum. Copies of the finalized curriculum were distributed several weeks earlier to five active church members to be read and to provide feedback. These members were also provided with a rubric with which to assess the curriculum. This goal was successfully met when the evaluation by

the select review group yielded at least a 90 percent sufficiency level (i.e., at least 90 percent of the participants rated the indicator as ‘satisfactory’ or higher] for each indicator noted in the rubric.

Table 2. Evaluation summary of project curriculum rubric with five church member evaluators utilizing the 4-point Likert scale

Select Member #	1	2	3	4	5	Total Point Average
Curriculum Indicator 1: Biblical Faithfulness	4	3.67	4	4	4	3.9
Curriculum Indicator 2: Methodology	4	3.67	3.67	4	4	3.87
Curriculum Indicator 3: Applicability	4	3.67	4	4	4	3.9
Curriculum Indicator 4: Visual Aids	4	3.3	4	4	4	3.86
Total Average Overall Likert Rating	4	3.58	3.92	4	4	3.9
Total % of class curriculum receiving at least a satisfactory rating	100	90	98	100	100	97.6

The feedback from this group of five was very helpful and can be summarized in six points:

First, there were many typos identified and corrections were made.

Second, there was consensus among the evaluators that the curriculum will be genuinely helpful for men who desire a greater understanding of shared leadership. The group expressed optimism and predicted great benefits to the men joining the study.

Third, the female evaluators suggested a similar curriculum be provided for women who could benefit from this study. This idea makes sense as I believe deacons’ wives ought to be knowledgeable of this material since they are in a ministry team with their husband. It would also benefit women who serve the church.

Fourth, several statements within the curriculum text were unclear and needed to be restated for greater clarity. These edits strengthened the points being made in those contexts.

Fifth, there was a suggestion to follow up this study with a defined apprenticeship, which may be the natural application for developing men as deacons and/or spiritual leaders. No apprenticeship exists at this time.

Sixth, suggestions were made concerning the additional use of visuals and illustrations to enhance the presentation of the material. These updates were completed.

It was within these three weeks that promotion began for the preaching mini-series and accompanying small group study for prospective deacons. Notices were placed in the weekly church newsletter, which is primarily emailed to both church members and guests. Additionally, the weekly church worship folder included clear information about the preaching series and its purpose and intent. Verbal announcements were made to the church family in worship services.

Weeks 4-6

Weeks 4-6 comprised the preaching of the project mini-series, entitled “Building Blocks of Shared Biblical Leadership.” The metaphor of building blocks was selected per an opportunity I had to observe the early stage of a home construction site, particularly the laying of the foundation and erection of the supporting cement block walls. It was my impression that the cement base and interlocking blocks provided both a solid and secure foundation against any movement as well as being a secure platform for additional construction. These simple observations resonated with me and found them to be a tangible illustration to the necessity and benefits of biblical shared leadership within the life of a local church, specifically my local church. For the next three Sundays I preached the messages reviewed by the active pastors and deacons. The titles of these three messages were (1) “Building Blocks for Shared Spiritual Leadership,” Matthew 10:1-15, Jesus shares His ministry (with the apostles); (2) “Building Blocks for Shared Spiritual Leadership,” Acts 6:1-7, the apostles share the ministry (with the seven); and (3) “Building Blocks for Shared Spiritual Leadership,” 1 Timothy 3:8-13, pastors share the ministry (with deacons).

These messages included the use of student notes, Power Point slides, and

message illustrations to help engage the church, and particularly the men present, to the need and challenge of spiritual leadership. Throughout the mini-series an invitation was given for men to consider and then sign-up for the six-week small group sessions that followed the series. After each of the messages was preached, men stepped forward to tell me that they felt led to be a part of the study.

A goal of 12 men was put forth in my proposal, and after the completion of the series, 16 men pre-registered to participate in the small group for prospective deacons. The roster was primarily older men (50+ years) in both age and in church experience (20+ years). Though all were church members (as was required) it was learned that only half of the men had actually read the church’s constitution and bylaws. The group was split almost evenly with half being members for less than 7 years. Four of the men were active deacons of which 3 have been ordained in our church and 5 had experienced ordination as either pastor or deacon elsewhere. All but 2 were married, and of those married, 4 had been through a divorce prior to their current marriage. Most of the men had been challenged at some point in the past to review the biblical teaching on spiritual gifts and had filled out some sort of gift inventory.

Table 3. Pre-class demographics of participants

Class Participants	16			
Age	16-20 (2)	21-29 (1)	40-49 (2)	
	50-59 (7)	60-69 (2)	70+ (2)	
Marital Status	Single (2) Married (10) Divorced/Remarried (4)			
Christian Life Duration/Years	6-10 (3)	11-20 (3)		
	21-40 (4)	40+ (6)		
Member FBCM /years	less than 1 (1)	1-3 (3)	4-6 (3)	
	7-10 (4)	11-13 (4)	13+ (1)	
Completed a Previous Deacon Study	Yes (5) No (11)			
Previously Ordained	No (9) Yes (7) Ordained at FBCM (4) other (3)			
Read the Church Constitution	Yes (8) No (8)			
Taken a Spiritual Gifts Inventory	Yes (11) No (5)			

Weeks 7-13

Weeks 7-13 were utilized for the presentation of the project curriculum reviewed by the group of five active members. For the seven weeks following the mini-series of messages it was my joy to meet with the men who had committed to participate in the small group study. We met on Sunday afternoons for two hours, from 4pm to 6pm, with a brief intermission of five minutes after the first hour. The two-hour block of time was divided into two teaching sessions. The first hour focused on the exegetical review and application of a particular passage of scripture identified within the curriculum. In the second hour the focus moved to an identified quality of shared leadership that was clearly operating in the context of the biblical passage. One might say that the first hour was more theoretical and conceptual while the second hour was more practical and related specifically to the interaction of spiritual leaders within the church context.

The weekly class covered the following areas

Week 1: Overall introduction of the group study and the taking of the pre-class questionnaire.

Week 2: An exegesis of Exodus 18:1-27—God uses men in powerful ways, and the elevation of the quality of partnership.

Week 3: An exegesis of Numbers 11:10-17—God’s response to Moses’ feelings of being overwhelmed and alone in his leadership, and the elevation of the quality of efficiency.

Week 4: An exegesis of Matthew 10:1-15—Jesus’ call and commissioning of the twelve men to serve with Him, and the elevation of the quality of delegation.

Week 5: An exegesis of Acts 6:1-7—Prompt delegation was made necessary by the explosive growth of the early Christian church, and the elevation of the quality of responsiveness.

Week 6: An exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:8-13—The pattern of shared leadership in the office of deacon, and the elevation of the quality of integrity.

Week 7: “Where Do We Go From Here?”—Review of the church constitution

and the re-taking of the pre-class questionnaire.

A detailed synopsis of each week and highlights of the time with the class participants are described next.

Class Sessions

Week 7: Class Session 1

Fifteen of the registered men attended this orientation session and the official launch of the predicted class. Printed information and expectations were distributed and group discussion on the purpose of the study took place. The session both opened and closed in a time of prayer. All the men filled out the pre-class questionnaire and upon doing so were given class notes with the assignment to read and review Exodus 18 the coming week. They were encouraged to read ahead in the entire study as they had the time.

Week 8: Class Session 2

Fifteen men attended this first session utilizing the project curriculum manuals. The men participated in the session by reading the designated scripture passages and interacting with me using the “mixer” discussion questions that I provided within the study. The session revealed a “blind spot” in the life of Moses and surfaced the input from his father-in-law’s choice to address that need directly (Exod 18:1-27). The result of this beneficial confrontation was a God-provided partnership with fifty others who would share in the burden of rendering judgments. The men reviewed their own current responsibilities in life to see if they were truly open to the input and counsel of others. The challenge was presented to take notice of those whom God may have placed in their lives to share necessary tasks with (e.g., their spouse, coworkers, and ministry partners).

Week 9: Class Session 3

Fourteen men attended this session during which we examined God’s response to Moses’ feelings of being overwhelmed (Num 11:10-17). This biblical study focused

on the vulnerability of primary leaders to feel overwhelmed. This awareness provided great conversation among the men. Most had experienced what it means to “hit the wall” in some area of life and some admitted to abdicating responsibility by simply exiting the pressure. My curriculum did not include personal anecdotes so I was not surprised when one man pointedly asked me about my experience with “burnout” or being overwhelmed. While staying within the time allotted for the study, I took time to share my own story and battle with depression and how the prayer of Moses in Numbers 11 expressed some of my feelings in the midst of those moments. The men listened and became more aware of the fact that pastors and deacons are not immune from discouragement and spiritual weakness even though in place to provide spiritual leadership. I was able to affirm God’s wisdom in giving Moses commands to follow, which brought him out of the discouragement and also added to him the additional help in the task of leading God’s people.

Week 10: Class Session 4

Fourteen men attended this session, which examined Jesus’ delegation of His message and mission (Matt 10:1-15). The application of this passage was that of delegation and the choice of the primary leader to share the ministry with others. The point was made that if Jesus utilized delegation, and He did, then that choice must not be viewed as a weakness but as a God-ordained means to an end. This session produced the most interaction as most everyone had something to say about both the benefits as well as the pitfalls of delegation. Delegation is harder than it looks and yet pastors are essentially directed to develop others for the sake of expanding the ministry. The choice of a pastor to share ministry with qualified deacons is both challenging and rewarding, but more than that, it is an obedient practice.

Week 11: Class Session 5

Fourteen men attended this session, which examined the response of the

apostles to the complaint concerning the neglected Hellenistic widows (Acts 6:1-7). The interaction was lively as we all took notice of the choice of the apostles to maintain unity by addressing the need but who also continued to obey their commission to prayerfully and boldly proclaim the good news of the resurrected Lord and Christ. The quality of humility surfaced as we read about a prompt responsiveness to the need. This response was not hindered by pride or by the apostles taking personally the necessary feedback from the church at large. This session gave me opportunity to open up the challenge pastors (and deacons) face when confronted with complaints from the church family. Some complaints have merit and require a prompt response and others may simply be restlessness within the life of a member. In both cases, humility is the basis for a hopeful resolution. The basis for the apostles' objectivity, we all agreed, was that everyone knew clearly that the ultimate goal of declaring Jesus' life could not be fully achieved without the necessary selection of the "seven" by whom the widows' need could be addressed.

Week 12: Class Session 6

Fourteen men attended this session, which examined the context and necessity for spiritual integrity in the lives of the men of the church and specifically the identified church leadership (1 Tim 3:8-13). It was the breakdown of virtue in the Ephesian church that caused Paul to provide Timothy with particular words and phrases that would install new and better leaders into service. There was good discussion on the point that church leaders are not spiritual "super heroes" but rather men who are living out the kind of life all of the believers within that community ought to aspire to live. The principle of shared leadership brought light to bear on the tangible requirement that deacons conduct their marriage, family, and home in a way that would be consistent with the way the church ought to function. We saw clearly, as a result of walking through the previous four passages, that the man who considers the role of a deacon must first embrace and demonstrate the principle of shared leadership within the context of the family. This practice should be evident before a man is to be considered for a shared leadership role

within the life of the fellowship. We agreed that the goal was not a flawless “perfection,” but rather a purposeful obedience. I also took time to describe our church’s current understanding of Paul’s identified “one-woman-man” virtue. After a biblical review it was communicated that this term does not, by itself, automatically prohibit a man who has experienced divorce from being considered. A thorough examination of the time of his conversion and of the nature of the circumstances of that divorce would be reviewed. Four of my men have been through a divorce so this topic had great significance to them as it provided clarity concerning the likelihood of them qualifying for becoming a deacon at our church. Alongside of this teaching it was made clear that a man, having been through a divorce as a believer, who pursued faithfulness with his current wife and made himself open to the Lord’s guidance could equally be used in service in other necessary capacities within the life of the church.

Week 13: Class Session 7

Fourteen men attended this final class session. This closing session gave me the opportunity to review the statements within our constitution on how the church deacons function as put forth in the particular statements. The class curriculum also asked the men to respond to how the material had impacted their own thinking and I fielded any questions still remaining concerning biblical passages or principles that we had discussed over the previous weeks. I also stated clearly how a man could state his desire to be considered as a deacon and predicted that the active deacons would be in touch with others as our constitution directs. We prayed together and committed ourselves to responding to the Lord’s guidance in each of our lives. Following this first hour of the final session I provided a second copy of the original questionnaire for all to be tested again. There was a final season of prayer together and an invitation to remain behind if any wanted to speak to me personally.

Weeks 14-15

The third goal of the project was the implementation of the training curriculum by means of providing a six-week class for at least twelve men who desired additional instruction as prospective deacons. This goal was measured by means of a questionnaire administered to each of the sixteen participants both prior to and after the six-week sessions. These final weeks were utilized to compile and assess the data from the two questionnaires. A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine if there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-class and post-class questionnaires. This goal was accomplished when the t-test results provided positive statistically significant differences between the two questionnaires given during the training series.

Summary of Questionnaire Results

The following table shows the positive improvement in answering the questions related to the project class sessions for men who are prospective deacons.

Table 4. Pre-class and post-class questionnaire results

Student	March 2015 Questionnaire Score	April 2015 Questionnaire Score	% Improvement
1	20/40	26/40	15
2	24/40	32/40	20
3	37/40	38/40	2.5
4	27/40	36/40	22.5
5	35/40	38/40	7.5
6	34/40	37/40	7.5
7	35/40	38/40	7.5
8	36/40	37/40	2.5
9	33/40	37/40	10
10	35/40	40/40	13.5
11	32/40	37/40	12.5
12	34/40	36/40	5
13	31/40	38/40	17.5
14	31/40	37/40	15
15	33/40	38/40	12.5
16	32/40	37/40	12.5

A paired t-test was used to determine if the average number of correct scores differed between March (pre) and April (post). On average, participants increased the number of correct questions by 4.56 or 11.4 percent ($p = 5.795 \times 10^{-7}$). The data in each group was skewed right such that the assumption of normal data may be suspect. Consequently, a confirmatory nonparametric analysis (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test) was utilized to compare the change, and the change was observed to be statistically significant at the $p = 0.0002329$ level. The average number of correct questions after the training (April) was 36.375 versus an average score before training (March) of 31.825. Figure 1 shows the increase in mean test scores along with standard error bars.¹

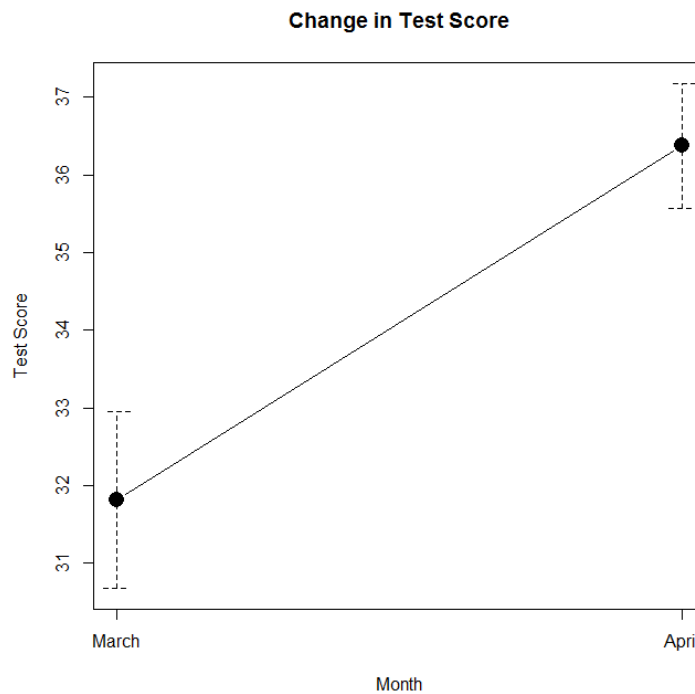


Figure 1. Test results

¹Tim Robinson assisted in putting the results into a t-test “paired sample for means” and in explaining the results. Tim Robinson is a Professor of Statistics in the Department of Statistics at the University of Wyoming. See appendix 5 for additional T-test results and analysis.

All of the students who attended the class were active members of our church family. Overall the men seemed to have had a general working knowledge of the biblical passages reviewed and of what our church constitution describes as the duty of the deacon. The positive improvement in the scores is attributed to the in-depth review of the biblical passages and of a more detailed explanation of the biblical qualities of a deacon as described by our church constitution. I was pleased to see the marked improvement alongside the reality that almost half of the group (8 of 16) missed at least 1 of the 6 sessions.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This path of creating and implementing a biblical study for prospective deacons has been both deeply challenging and equally rewarding. It took several tries to land on the particular topic for which I have spent a great deal of time, money, and energy to accomplish. In the end, it is the development of spiritual leadership which has been accurately identified as a focus in my life and work as one called by the Lord Jesus to shepherd His sheep. As one who normally gravitates to seeing the “big picture,” the task of truly focusing on the sixteen men who participated in my project required great faith and discipline. The choice of Jesus to call twelve men to Himself and to model and to speak into their lives did not seem like the way to launch a kingdom-sized movement. Yet, to doubt His wisdom on this is to embrace a fad-driven mentality of spirituality that denies the impact one relationship can have on another. Jesus developed leadership one life at a time, and there is no shortcut for pastors who truly desire to experience shared leadership in their context of ministry. I have been changed through this process on just about every level and am experiencing a new gratitude for the sufficiency of the scriptures to provide guidance on how to develop men who embrace the biblical principle of shared leadership.

Assessing the Project’s Purpose

The purpose of this project was to provide an introductory curriculum in which the principle of shared leadership would be identified and explained for men at First Baptist Church, Montverde, Florida. This basic study provided the men who participated with a background on how God seems to have chosen to work and how this principle of shared leadership is applied in the identification and selection of deacons. The results of

the evaluation tools utilized in this project, along with my own personal experience of implementing it, would indicate that the purpose for this project has been achieved. The group of men who participated came from varied backgrounds and differing levels of biblical understanding, but all demonstrated a good working knowledge of the content I purposed to transmit. Their interaction throughout the project class confirmed they were successfully processing the material and understanding more clearly the need and qualifications for being spiritual leaders, such as deacons.

Assessing the Project's Goals

The goals for the project were simple but contributed to achieving overall success. The first goal was to expose a mini-series of project messages to the current leadership team of pastors and deacons. This was a particular privilege because I am experiencing the benefits of shared leadership with these men, and these men know the truth about how this principle is being applied in my own context. Their review of the messages and completion of the rubric provided me with the necessary feedback and encouragement to truly make the project a church-wide emphasis. If the interaction with these men had gone any other way than the way it went, it would have left me with nothing to teach, and no current ministry model to direct the class participants to. Gratefully, the ministry friendships and relationships made this an enjoyable goal to achieve. I will never forget our interaction around a table in the lobby of our worship center where it they gave their full support for the messages and agreed to be a part of the six-week class to follow.

The second goal was the selection of five church members to review and assess the working draft of the class curriculum. I selected both men and women who love the Lord, love His church, and who could make a good assessment of the benefit of the curriculum to our church. They all had been believers for several years and understood the challenge of calling men for spiritual service, particularly as partners in ministry with a pastor. Their feedback was favorable toward the study itself but what impacted me the most did not relate to the successful rubric results. All five of those who read through the

material unanimously gave their opinion, with conviction, that there exists a deep need for the study and that it must be made available for our men, but for other men as well. I had not even completed the final touches of the study nor taught the study through one time, and yet they chose to predict that I ought to be planning to teach it wherever the Lord opened the door for me to do so. I was humbled by this sentiment but also quick to recognize the Lord's hand in even bringing the project to light. Time will tell the fruitfulness experienced in the hearts of the men who walked through the class with me and only the Lord knows the extent to which the study may benefit other pastors and men who are prospective deacons. The third goal was the implementation of a class in which my curriculum would be presented. The results of the testing both prior to and then after the class speak for themselves. The knowledge of the particular texts I selected and how our church applies these principles as written within our constitution definitely rose as a result of the six two-hour Sunday afternoon sessions together.

Strengths of the Project

The project strength was directly related to all of the reading, writing, and planning which took place either at the seminary or in the sabbatical seasons which my church allowed me to take. There are several qualities about my project which I feel contributed to what is currently measured as having been a success:

A Biblical and Theological Basis

The stated path for the application of biblical theology was clearly the study of the Scriptures. The premise of shared leadership needed to be examined and identified as having biblical origin so that the men knew these were not just my ideas for how our church should operate. They read the Scripture passages together out loud and were able to walk through the exposition together with me.

A Reading Study

In my experience with other studies, the reading study seems to be the best

format for passing through great amounts of biblical and theological study. Reading a text through together with a given commentary assured that all minds were focused on the same content and interact with it together. Questions that come up within the context of this reading tend to be more focused on the impact of the truth and less about other related but not as pertinent issues. Each participant also holds in their hands the entire study which frees them to read ahead or do their own “deeper” study in preparation for each class session. The reading format also kept me on track and made sure that I taught that which I felt needed to be learned.

The “Mixers”

Learning the material was just one aspect of the project, actually applying the truth was another. As I worked to bring my biblical and theoretical research together into a curriculum, questions emerged which I inserted into the material. These questions were not “softball” questions that anyone in the room would be able to answer on the spot but more reflective and self-revealing to each man. In other words, in answering the reflection questions (“mixers”), each man had to be courageously honest with themselves and with God first, before they chose to speak up in class. This has been my own journey. It can be a more painful road to travel but for these men who were considering becoming spiritual leaders the path had to include questions communicating the seriousness required for such a role. When the men did chose to answer a “mixer” during class it revealed something about that man and his journey with God. As a result, there was very little “small talk” in the class sessions, but all related to responding to the truth.

Quotes by Commentators

The project was strengthened by the inclusion of quotes from selected biblical commentators, as well as from the broader Christian community of supporting research texts. I sought to reveal to my own church family that my spiritual knowledge was being subjected to review through means of book “mentors” to whom I submitted my own

study. Though the Bible is my final authority and the Spirit my guide, other believers enjoy this same conviction but also simply know more about what a text says or what an original context means. The men seemed to really enjoy the additional counsel from the “greater church” body as experienced through the placement of these supporting quotes throughout the study. These quotes helped all to realize what I was presenting was not my own creation but truth being lived out in the universal church in varied times and places. In a very real sense, we were connecting with the way in which Jesus is at work everywhere, but who wants to work these principles out in our very own context, if we would but let Him.

Weaknesses of the Project

Though the essential goals of the project were achieved, it is undeniably clear that there is a need for adjustments and additions to strengthen the project.

The Need for an Epilogue

A critique that came from one of the men is one which I sincerely agree with. The class sessions included in the curriculum did not contain a closing session in which I reveal how these truths have impacted me personally and how I see them impacting our church family. Though these thoughts are contained within the study, there was a marked void in the way I concluded the study. The intensity of the study simply came to a screeching halt after six sessions—it would have been beneficial to have a closing session to interact together on how the truth we just walked through is changing our lives. I agreed with this stated weakness and predicted an additional session of written material and time for closing interaction in future classes.

Time Allotted for the “Mixers”

The “mixers” were part of the core purpose for the class curriculum and yet I am not sure we fully benefitted from them. In fact, I simply challenged the men to do many “mixers” at home, on their own. These may have been answered by the men but I

had no way to know one way or the other. The “mixers” are essential to the progress of thought in the curriculum and yet I did not provide time in the class setting to fully explore each one with each of the sixteen men. To some it appeared that my use of the “mixers” was simply to solidify what was just taught or to ensure understanding, rather than interactive feedback. I was conflicted about the kind of interaction I desired with the men. I did want to transmit study material, but also desired that the men enjoy the freedom to interact with the content. The class setting we experienced was truly beneficial, but did not fully allow for both of these experiences.

The Need for Feedback Forms

I have been in many seminars which provide feedback forms to participants, yet I failed to provide this to my men. I did provide an information sheet for those who may have wanted to initiate a conversation about serving as a deacon, but no feedback forms, anonymous or not. I did request this help verbally and some responded. Still, their feedback, having just come through the material, would be helpful to strengthen the curriculum and class. This sheet will be provided in the future.

Increased Use of Media and Biblical Background Images

The primary metaphor for the class was that of “Building Blocks” and I displayed a few Power Point images of a foundation under construction along with the session title slides. These slides helped set the atmosphere for the study. Still, it may have been beneficial to provide a timeline and images depicting the geographical locations of the primary biblical texts which we were studying. Visual maps may be something I include in the study itself or perhaps in the class Power Point presentation. As the study involved the reading of the text, there was not as much emphasis upon the screen, but a few clear images could only help.

What I Would Do Differently

Springing off of the weaknesses mentioned, it would seem that I must make changes in either the duration of the class sessions or plan to meet in a retreat setting where there can be additional time. The class curriculum was provided for them to read as they chose, but life and the normal distractions of life may have taken them away from time to focus and to reflect. With additional sessions I could provide time for each man to reflect and respond to the “mixer” while in the class session. In a retreat setting the entire weekend could be planned and structured to provide greater opportunity to interact alone or with other men on the questions. Overall, this interaction would strengthen the men’s connection with each other if they had the time to truly interact together on the serious issues of spiritual leadership. The study also challenged the men to take a spiritual gifts inventory and to read over the church’s Constitution. Some men took the time to do this, others did not. In a setting with more time allotted, I could be sure that each man completed the assignments which were meant to inform and to encourage them.

If the hoped outcome for the class was a more educated man in our church, then the curriculum will do this. Yet, the hope goes beyond this. My plan is to help men, whether they desire or qualify as a deacon, take steps forward in their role as a spiritual leader. Though the class curriculum stated this clearly, and I spoke for it repeatedly, my actions could have made it clearer to the men. A designated time for filling out a response sheet, which would have surfaced their thoughts, could have been a truly beneficial tool in helping them forward. I will give greater attention to the closing aspects of the class in future deliveries.

Theological Reflections

The nature of the Trinity is not original with me, but it has truly shone light upon the whole idea of shared leadership. In the sessions I said several times, “God never does anything alone.” The message in this for me and for my men is that God is a community of persons, equal in essence and yet distinguishable in person. These “persons”

interact perfectly together and carry out tasks as God, unified and yet serving one another in harmony and glory. The choice of God to extend His being, to share Himself, with His creation, is not something He had to do, but is rather His loving prerogative to do so. Why an omnipotent God chooses to use weak and flawed person in biblical history can only be explained by His relational nature and desire to “share” His person and leadership with others. Watching Moses’ interaction and struggle to trust God taught me that weakness is not an unexpected experience for any to whom God shares Himself and His will. What honors God is the acknowledgement that I need Him. This is in contrast to the predictable resentment toward Him for His making me so weak in the first place. Jesus’ delegation of His mission and message display the divine choice to share God’s precious will with those who will believe and follow. For Jesus it was the will of the Father shared with the twelve men to whom He would empower to carry on after His return home. Once again, in Acts 6, the apostles carry out works of great supernatural power and yet their empowerment gifts did not include omniscience. The fellowship they led overlooked the Greek-speaking widows. Spiritual empowerment does not mean one will not have blind spots. Knowing this provides the humility needed to receive rebuke or complaints that may be truly warranted, and then offer a wise solution which involves shared leadership. The study of the virtue list in 1 Timothy has clarified the need for clear biblical instruction on the nature of the biblical family. The Genesis 2 family is the first display of shared leadership as God made His own creation a partner in the task of maximizing the originally created world. Paul states that the man who will serve as overseer or as servant must understand shared leadership at home. This basic understanding made clear in most churches would probably qualify some men who have been overlooked, and also disqualify many men who were chosen using some other criteria. My call is to elevate the call of men to honor God in their marriages and homes so that the option to serve as needed within the context of the local church will always be before them. To do this I must model

the obedience required by the Scriptures, by aspiring to the qualities laid out by Paul for any and all men who desire to follow Jesus.

Personal Reflections

I am not now the man that I was when I began my doctoral studies over six years ago. My understanding of shared leadership only went so far and generally kept me from trusting other men in the ministry. I am living out the truth of shared leadership more now than at any time in the past. The Father's love for me and His desire to share Himself with me in my role as a pastor has moved me from the attitude of "have to" to the freedom of "get to." This major shift has become clearly evident in my role of ministering alongside of other men. As I have embraced the Fatherhood of God and His sufficient presence within me, it has made me more of a spiritual partner to other men who also know their own weaknesses and failures in life. The goal of the spiritual life is not necessarily ethical perfection but is rather the commitment to remain in faithful and submissive obedience to God's Word as it relates to our lives. This project truly represents a new "love language" that I am beginning to utilize with my ministry to men. The language does not originate with me, but is in fact the same original language used by a God who desires to share Himself with His people and use their service together as shared leaders carry out His will. In a very real sense, I have no clear idea of what God may choose to do in the lives of my men as a result of the journey through this project. Yet, I have no doubt His Word will accomplish fully all it intends to, and may it all be for His glory.

Conclusion

I cannot say that I will not be relieved when the requirements of this project are completed. It has been a long and difficult journey to finally type these closing words. Still, I would not trade the benefit of the process for anything in the world. It has been used to test me and to discover much that was simply paralyzing me in the exercise of my call

to ministry. The process has stretched me beyond my own strength and on several occasions I had mentally made the decision to quit the whole matter. Only God in His mercy has kept me on this journey which means it is not about me, but about Him. I am a better follower of Jesus, a genuinely happier husband and father, a more honest and loving pastor, and overall a more grateful and trusting person than ever before.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge level relating to shared leadership and the role of a deacon. This research is being conducted by Jonathan Winningham for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research you will simply respond to a group of questions before participating in the six-week training class and then you will answer the same questions after the six-week training class is completed. 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 at any time.* By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal Code Word: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Please check or fill in your response to each question. This information will be held in strict confidence.

General Demographic Questions:

1. Your age in years?
 - _____ a. 16-20
 - _____ b. 21-29
 - _____ c. 30-39
 - _____ d. 40-49
 - _____ e. 50-59
 - _____ f. 60-69
 - _____ g. 70 and over

2. Your current marital status?
 - _____ a. Single
 - _____ b. Married
 - _____ c. Divorced
 - _____ d. Divorced - Remarried

3. How long have you been a Christian?
 - _____ a. Less than a year
 - _____ b. 1-5 years
 - _____ c. 6-10 years
 - _____ d. 11-20 years
 - _____ e. 21-40 years
 - _____ f. More than 40 years

4. How long have you been a member at First Baptist Church of Montverde?
- a. Less than a year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-6 years
 - d. 7-10 years
 - e. 11-13 years
 - f. More than 13 years
5. Have you ever been a part of a study concerning what a deacon is and does?
- Yes
 - No

Questions Related to the Biblical Basis for Deacons

6. In Exodus 18, what family member came to visit Moses after he had led the children of Israel out of Egypt?
- a. Miriam, his sister
 - b. Gershom, Moses' son
 - c. Zippora, Moses' wife
 - d. Jethro, Moses' Father-in-law
7. In the same chapter, what problem did that person identify about Moses and his leadership style?
- a. he did not speak kindly to the people he was leading
 - b. he was trying to do a job that was too big for him to do alone
 - c. he did special favors only for those who were his close friends
 - d. he wasn't giving his employees the proper pay for their work
8. In the same chapter, how did Moses respond to this accusation that he needed to change how he was doing his job?
- a. he listened respectfully and changed the way he had been doing things
 - b. he listened patiently but didn't make any changes in the way he did his job
 - c. he became angry, lost his temper, and changed nothing
 - d. he felt bad about what he heard, but didn't see any way to make a change
9. In the Numbers 11, Moses is angry and complains to God about a difficult issue that is bothering him. What was that issue?
- a. the weather was too dry and the heat unbearable for travel
 - b. the behavior of his oldest son was disappointing and he didn't know what to do
 - c. the demands of the people he leading had become too much for him
 - d. the wife he married was homesick and refused to travel any further
10. In the same chapter, what does God do in response to Moses' complaints?
- a. He comforted Moses' wife and gave her strength to go on
 - b. He changed the weather patterns so that traveling became more enjoyable
 - c. He had Moses' select several other men to help him with the people
 - d. He appeared to Moses' son personally and warned him about his behavior

11. In the same chapter, what was the effect of God's response to Moses' complaint?
- a. Moses was no longer alone in his job
- b. Moses' son became obedient and honorable
- c. Moses' wife became a genuine support to him
- d. Moses secured more comfortable weather conditions for the people
12. In Matthew 10:1-5, how many men did Jesus choose to be His Apostles?
- a. 10
- b. 7
- c. 12
- d. 3
13. In the same chapter, what two things did Jesus give to His apostles prior to sending them out on a mission for Him?
- a. shoes and a new cloak for cold nights
- b. water and a loaf of bread
- c. authority and clear instructions
- d. map and money for lodging
14. In the same passage, (including chapter 11:1 for this question), what did Jesus do after He sent them out on mission?
- a. He stayed around them to be sure that they represented Him well
- b. He took a nap and enjoyed a cool drink
- c. He moved on to His next location while they went elsewhere
- d. He stayed where He was and waited anxiously for their return
15. In Acts 6:1-7, who is the source of the complaints that are voiced in this passage?
- a. the wives of the Apostles
- b. the political leaders of Jerusalem
- c. the Roman soldiers
- d. the Greek Jewish believers within the early Church
16. In the same passage, what was their complaint?
- a. they did not get paid enough for the job they were asked to do
- b. they had widows who were not receiving proper care
- c. they could not seem to find a suitable place to worship
- d. they couldn't control the crowds that gathered in the temple area
17. In the same passage, what did the Apostles do about the complaint?
- a. not much seeing as it didn't really fall under their responsibility
- b. formed a committee to delay action so the problem could resolve itself
- c. called for the identification of several men who could address the complaint
- d. shared it with the local authorities so that they could handle it
18. In 1 Timothy 3:8-13, what is the first quality listed when identifying a church deacon?
- a. a man who is kind to everyone
- b. a man who is not known to drink alcoholic beverages often
- c. a man who is worthy of respect
- d. a man who loves his wife

19. In the same passage, which quality will you find listed in identifying a church deacon?
- a. a good education
 b. a charismatic personality
 c. a background in business management
 d. a clear conscience
20. In the same passage, what is the first quality listed for the wife of a married church deacon?
- a. she must be a musician or artist
 b. she must be physically beautiful
 c. she must be worthy of respect
 d. she must be educated
21. In the same passage, what word is used to describe how the married deacon's children and all related home concerns are to be managed?
- a. perfectly
 b. competently
 c. optimistically
 d. ruthlessly
22. In the same passage, what two rewards are there for men who serve well as deacons?
- a. popularity and increased power within the fellowship
 b. increased respect among the members and greater confidence in the faith
 c. a permanent parking space and a building being named after you
 d. the option of choosing tasks and telling younger deacons what to do

Questions Related to Deacon-Related Practices:

23. Can you give the names of the two currently active deacons who faithfully serve our church at this time?
- a. _____
b. _____
24. Have you ever read completely through our Church Constitution and Bylaws?
- Yes
 No
25. Which of the following statements would describe you?
- a. I have been ordained as a deacon
 b. I am currently married to an ordained deacon
 c. I have an immediate family member who is an ordained deacon
 d. I have a relative outside of my immediate family who is serving as an ordained deacon
 e. None of the above
26. How necessary do you feel it is for our church to have deacons?
- a. Not Necessary
 b. Very Necessary
 c. Helpful, but not Necessary
 d. Not Sure at this time

27. Have you ever read completely through our Church Constitution and Bylaws?
 Yes
 No
28. Which of the following statements would describe you?
 a. I have been ordained as a deacon
 b. I am currently married to an ordained deacon
 c. I have an immediate family member who is an ordained deacon
 d. I have a relative outside of my immediate family who is serving as an ordained deacon
 e. None of the above
29. How necessary do you feel it is for our church to have deacons?
 a. Not Necessary
 b. Very Necessary
 c. Helpful, but not Necessary
 d. Not Sure at this time
30. How should deacons view their relationship with the Pastoral staff?
 a. as partners
 b. as hired help (only no pay)
 c. as persons to be dumped on
 d. as slaves
31. How would you describe the qualifications of a pastor and of a deacon?
 a. different
 b. basically the same
 c. similar but with significant differences
 d. the same
32. What is the primary reason for the role of a deacon?
 a. so the primary leader won't have to do what he doesn't want to do anymore
 b. so that the church has someone to talk to if they don't like the pastor
 c. so that the church's mission can be carried out and expanded
 d. so that persons who can't find a job can stay busy and out of trouble
33. Who gives the final approval of a man who desires to serve as a deacon?
 a. the pastor
 b. the active and inactive deacons
 c. the active members of the church
 d. the chairmen of the church committees
34. How long is an active deacon's approved term of service?
 a. one year
 b. three years
 c. two years
 d. four years
35. The active deacons prepare the Lord's Table how often?
 a. once every quarter
 b. one a month
 c. once every six weeks
 d. as often as scheduled by the pastor

36. How often do the active deacons meet with the pastoral leadership?
_____ a. twice a month
_____ b. monthly
_____ c. once every two months
_____ d. quarterly
37. On what basis may the financial resources called “benevolence” be distributed?
_____ a. whenever a member or non-member feels that they have a need
_____ b. whenever a deacon hears of someone in need
_____ c. whenever the pastor requests it for someone in need
_____ d. whenever two active deacons agree to respond to a need
38. What kinds of visits may a deacon be asked to make?
_____ a. a hospital visit – to pray over and encourage an ill active member
_____ b. a benevolence visit – to explore the circumstances of a financial need
_____ c. a consistently-absent member visit – to see what may be keeping them away
_____ d. All of the above
39. How can a deacon be removed from active service should he no longer wish to serve out his approved term?
_____ a. he may simply walk away and no longer serve
_____ b. only by the approval of the church
_____ c. he may only show up at meetings but never actually do any service
_____ d. he may write a letter to the pastor and then stop serving
40. What is the purpose of deacon ordination should a man be approved to serve?
_____ a. to bestow on him magical powers
_____ b. to demonstrate by the laying of hands that a man has been tested and approved
_____ c. to cause other members to treat that man with increased dignity and honor
_____ d. to connect you somehow to the very first deacons who ever served

APPENDIX 2

RUBRIC TO ASSESS SERMON NOTES

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge level relating to shared leadership and the role of a deacon. This research is being conducted by Jonathan Winningham for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research you will simply respond to a series of statements concerning specific sermons that will be preached in preparation for a follow-up six-week class for prospective deacons. 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 at any time.* By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Identity and Formation of Deacons Sermon Rubric Sermon to Be Evaluated

1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary	1	2	3	4	Comments
Criteria					
Biblical Faithfulness					
The Title of the Sermon clearly informs the congregation that the topic concerns the identity and formation of deacons.					
The Content of the Sermon is clearly based upon a clear understanding of the particular text being preached.					
The main points of the sermon can be clearly identified in the particular passage being preached.					
Methodology					
The stated goal for the sermon is clear and contributes to the objective of challenging men for service.					
The sermon clearly connects the biblical setting with the current setting of our church.					
The sermon clearly provides clarity as to the need for our church to make the process of identifying deacon more intentional.					

Applicability					
The sermon contains specific steps of application for all church members.					
There are specific challenges to the men related to spiritual leadership.					
The sermon clearly informs all men of the six-week class for prospective deacons.					
Visual Aids					
The teaching handouts for the sermon are clear and easy to read and respond to.					
The PowerPoint slides are attractive and congruent with the preaching notes.					
The object lessons used in the sermon are well-thought and aid in understanding.					

APPENDIX 3

RUBRIC TO ASSESS SESSION CURRICULUM

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge level relating to shared leadership and the role of a deacon. This research is being conducted by Jonathan Winningham for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research you will simply respond to a series of statements concerning specific curriculum session that will be taught during a six-week class for prospective deacons. 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 at any time.* By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Prospective Deacon Class Session Rubric Class Session to Be Evaluated -

1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The Title of the session clearly informs the participant that the topic concerns the identity and formation of deacons.					
The Content of the Session is clearly based upon a clear understanding of the biblical text being taught.					
The main points of the session can be clearly identified in the particular passage of scripture being examined.					
Methodology					
The stated goal for the session is clear and contributes to the objective of challenging men for service.					
The session content clearly connects the biblical setting with the current setting of training leadership within our church.					
The session clearly provides clarity as to the identity and need for deacons.					

Applicability					
The session provides specific time for all the participants to ask questions.					
There session provides specific time for all participants to give feedback.					
The session provides specific time for all participants to pray with the instructor.					
Visual Aids					
The teaching handouts for the session are clear and easy to read and respond to.					
The PowerPoint slides are attractive and congruent with the teaching notes.					
The object lessons used in the session are well-thought and aid in understanding.					

APPENDIX 4

COMPARISON TABLE

This table is helpful in synthesizing the stated qualities of the titled leadership and seeing that the specific virtues noted are included to contrast with the bad conduct of some within the given context.¹

Table A1. Comparisons

	<i>Overseer</i> (I Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-23)	<i>Deacon</i> (I Tim 3:8-13)	<i>Elder</i> (Titus 1:5-9)	<i>Opponents</i>
1	Desiring to be an over-seer is a καλον εργον, "good work" (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15)	Cf # 20 below		Cf. worthless for any εργον αγαθον, "good work" (Titus 1:16)
2	ανεπιληποσ, "above reproach"; μαρτυρια καλη, "good reputation," with outsiders	ανεγκλητοσ, "above Reproach"	ανεγκλητοσ, "above Reproach"	Have brought reproach on the church (esp. Titus 1:1-14); also the overall picture of their activities
3	μιασ γυναικοσ ανηρ, "'one-woman' man"	μιασ γυναικοσ ανηρ, "'one-woman' man"	μιασ γυναικοσ ανηρ, "'one-woman' man"	Forbid marriage (I Timothy 4:3), possibly child-bearing (I Tim 2:15), and seducing women (2 Tim 3:6)
4	νηφαλιον, "clear-minded"		εγκρατησ, "disciplined"	
5	σωφρων, "self-controlled"		σωφρων, "self-controlled"	ακρατησ, "uncontrolled" (2 Tim 3:3)
6	κοσμοιοσ, "dignified"	σεμνοσ, "dignified" (also his wife, or deaconess, v 11)		

¹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 156-58.

Table A1 continued

7	φιλοξενος, "hospitable"	See comment on I Tim 3:11, pg. 202-205	φιλοξενος, "hospitable"	Upset house churches (Titus 1:11); worm their way into women's houses (2 Tim 3:6)
8	διδασκτικος, "skilled in teaching" (cf. I Tim 5:24-25)		Δυνατος . . . και παρακαλειν εν τη διδασκαλια τη υγιαينوση και . . . ελεγχειν, "able to exhort with sound teaching and rebuke"	ετεροδιδασκαλειν, "teaching a different gospel" (I Tim 1:3; cf. 4:7; 5:3; 6:4, 20; 2 Tim 4:3-4); want to be νομοδιδασκαλοι, "teachers of the law," but are ignorant and dogmatic (I Tim 1:7); heaping up false διδασκαλους, "teachers" (2 Tim 4:3); devoted to the διδασκαλιας, "teachings," of demons (I Tim 4:1)
9	μη παροινοσ – "not a drunkard"	μη οινω πολλω, "not addicted to wine"	μη παροινοσ – "not a drunkard"	
10	μη πληκτηησ – "not violent"		μη πληκτηησ – "not violent"	
11	Επιεκησ, "gracious" (cf. 2 Tim 2:24)		μη αυθαδησ – "not arrogant"	Lack love (I Tim 1:5-6)
12	μη αμαχοσ, "not quarrelsome"		μη οργιλοσ – "not quick tempered"	Teaching results in μαχασ, "quarrels" (2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9)
13	μη αφιλαργυροσ "not a lover of money"	μη αισχροκερδεισ, "not greedy for gain"	μη αισχροκερδεισ, "not greedy for gain"	Think godliness is a πορισμοσ, "means of profit" (I Tim 6:5); wish πλουτειν "to be rich" (1 Tim 6:9-10); φιλαργυροι, "lovers of money" (2 Tim 3:2); teach for αισχρου κερδουσ, "shameful gain" (Titus 1:11)

Table A1 continued

14	του ιδιου οικου καλως προισταμενον, τεκνα εχοντα εν υποταγη, “managing his own household well, having submissive children”	τεκων καλως προισταμενοι και των ιδων οικων, “managing their children and their own household well”	τεκνα εχων πιστα μη εν κατηγορια ασωτιας η ανυποτακτα, “having faithful children, not with accusation of debauchery or rebellious	γονευσιν απειθεις, “disobedient to parents” (2 Tim 3:2); ανυποτακτοι, “rebellious” (Titus 1:10)
15	μη νεοφοτος, “not a recent convert”, lit. “not newly planted”	Test first to see if δοκιμος, “approved” (cf. 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Tim 5:22)		Do not appoint elders too quickly (1 Tim 5:22, 24-25) who are αδοκιμος “not approved” (Titus 1:16)
16	So that they do not fall into the devil’s (διαβολος) snare; not fall into the devil’s judgment (cf. 2 Tim 2:26)			Turned two leaders over to Satan (σατανας, 1 Tim 1:20); follows teachings of demons (δαιμονια; 1 Tim 4:1); some widows stray after Satan (σατανας; 1 Tim 5:15; cf. v 14); devil has taken them captive (διαβολος; 2 Tim 2:26)
17.		εχοντας το μυστηριον της πιστεως, “possessing the mystery of the faith”	αντεχομενον του . . . πιστου λογου, “holding firmly to the faithful word”	Teach a different gospel that downplays πιστις, “faith” (1 Tim 1:4, 5, 12-17, 19)
18		εν καθαρα συνειδησει, “with a clear conscience” (cf. 2 Tim 2:22)		Συνειδησις, “conscience” is seared/branded (1 Tim 4:2; cf. 1 Tim 1:5), defiled (Titus 1:5); καρδια, “heart” is not pure (1 Tim 1:5); πιστις, “faith,” is insincere (1 Tim 1:5); εν υποκρισει, “in hypocrisy” (1 Tim 4:2); corrupt νουν, “mind” (1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:8); πλανωντες και πλανωμενοι, “deceiving and deceived” (2 Tim 3:13; cf. Titus 1:10)

Table A1 continued

18		εν καθαρα συνειδησει, “with a clear conscience” (cf. 2 Tim 2:22)		Συνειδησις, “conscience” is seared/branded (I Tim 4:2; cf. I Tim 1:5), defiled (Titus 1:5); καρδια, “heart” is not pure (I Tim 1:5); πιστις, “faith,” is insincere (I Tim 1:5); εν υποκρισει, “in hypocrisy” (I Tim 4:2); corrupt νουν, “mind” (I Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:8); πλανωντες και πλανωμενοι, “deceiving and deceived” (2 Tim 3:13; cf. Titus 1:10)
19		μη διλογους, “not gossips” (cf. I Tim 3:11)		Cf. gossiping widows (φλυαροι) who may be following the false teaching (1 Tim 5:13)
20		Βαθμον . . . καλον περιποιυνται και πολλην παρρησιαν εν πιστει, “acquire a good standing . . . and confidence in the faith”		περι την πιστιν εναυαγησαν περι την πιστιν εναυαγησαν “shipwrecking the faith” (I Tim 1:19), and ανατρεπουσιν την . . . πιστην, “destroying the faith” (I Tim 2:18)
21			φιλαγαθον, “love what is good”	αφιλαγαθοι, “not love the good” (2 Tim 3:3); φιληδονιο μαλλον η φιλοθεοι, “lovers of pleasure rather than God” (2 Tim 3:4)
22			Θεου οικονομος, “steward of God”	Not pursue οικονομιαν θεου την εν πιστει, “stewardship of God by faith” (I Tim 1:4)
23			Δικαιος, “just”	
24			Οσιος, “holy”	Ανασιοι, “unholy” (2 Tim 3:2); ασεβειας, “un-godly” (2 Tim 2:16)

APPENDIX 5

T-TEST FOR PROSPECTIVE DEACONS' CLASS

Table A2. T-test for paired two samples for means for prospective deacons' class

	Prospective Deacons Post Class	Prospective Deacons Pre Class
Mean	36.375	31.8125
Variance	10.38333	20.82917
Observations	16	16
Pearson Correlation	.875473	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	15	
t Stat	10.8182	
P(T<=t) one tail	5.8E-07	
t Critical one-tail	1.75305	
P(T<=t) two tail	1.16E-06	
t Critical two-tail	2.13145	

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR PROSPECTIVE DEACONS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTVERDE, FLORIDA

Jonathan Goforth Winningham, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Brian J. Vickers

This project sought to inform the men at First Baptist Church about what it means to serve as a deacon in the church. Chapter 1 introduces First Baptist Church of Montverde and the compelling need for this project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for shared leadership and examples of God's choice to join leaders together to accomplish His will. Chapter 3 identifies five essential qualities for successful shared leadership that are affirmed in writings from a spectrum of Christian traditions. Chapter 4 describes the public sermons, the curriculum, and the actual operation of the class for educating the men about what it means to serve as a deacon. Chapter 5 analyzes and evaluates the results of the project and offers both theological and personal reflection on the project.

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