So, what does a Deacon do?

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Version 2.4

- What is a deacon?
- How should they be appointed?
- Are their primary duties to give sermonettes and organise socials?
- Or is it to serve the underprivileged, sacrificing their time and resources for others?
- What should be done if someone fills the role of deacon but does not fulfill it?

“RIGHT FEARS NO FIGHT!” Why? Because you immediately have the upper hand, the opposition will inevitably be defeated – no matter how long it takes. Victory is inevitable.
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Background
By way of background, Church structure has always interested me, and it didn’t take long to see (in my teens) that there were similarities between the synagogue structure of the first century and that of the Church.

I recall talking about this with a WCG minister in 1973/74 but with little in answers. I still recall thinking that James was the Church leader – he explained that it was Peter after which I undertook my own studies which confirmed his view.

Anyhow, over the decades I devoured many articles on the subject and have a box full of them. One of the most eye-opening books is *From Synagogue to Church* by James Burtchaell which I stumbled across at the University of Sydney library in the early or mid-1990s.

The positions of pastors, elders, deacons, teachers, Matt 18:15-20 practice, appointment of elders by a body or council of elders (ITim 4:14) etc were similar to that of the synagogue. After all, the early church met in the synagogue and after being thrown out were forced to meet in homes or halls.

Helpful works include *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* by B L Merkle and *Biblical Eldership* by A Strauss. The former, alas, does not see how the NT Church’s structure was very similar to that of the Synagogue in the first century. Nevertheless, the author has a lot of worthwhile information.

One which has a lot of research but cannot see the connection to the synagogue is *The Original Bishops* by A C Stewart.

NB: this article is not referring to current deacons and deaconesses. Rather, the author is concerned how some propel themselves or are appointed when they are not appropriate – many at grassroots know.

In this context it is of concern that some wish to propel themselves into positions. However, the Bible reveals that the role of a deacon is a very serious position with duties critical to the health of the local Church. Such a one must be non-political.

**Whom should not be chosen?**

If someone has a record of cliquishness, dirty talk, drinking too much, doing some business on the Sabbath, being rude and abusive toward people not in their clique and not supporting or believing many doctrines of the Church, should they be ordained as deacons?

Note ITim 3:8-10:

“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.”
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Note: to be ordained as deacons, they must have the following characteristics as a minimum:

1. **dignified** - or do they slander people and nasty to them to their faces with all sorts of horrible and jealous remarks. Even very nasty and cutting remarks to their faces! Do they partake of and/or lead cliques?
2. **are they double-tongued** – ie not to be inconsistent in speech or two-faced. Being underhanded is hardly Christian
3. **not greedy for dishonest gain** - eg doing business on the Sabbath
4. **hold the mystery of the faith** – which includes doctrinal integrity. I find it amazing that they do NOT believe in many doctrines.

If they have a track record of the above, they should not be ordained.

Some issues they may exhibit include the timing of the Passover (eg 15 instead of 14 Abib), non-belief in the ‘lost’ tribes of Israel (though when it comes to the push they will suddenly reverse what they said and out of convenience) etc. To them this doctrine is ‘a little thing’ = another way of saying it is not true and they don’t believe in it (ie ‘church speak’). Don’t let them fool you – many do not believe in this doctrine, yet believe in the ordination of women to be elders and such like.

Keep such out of the deaconships and ministry! For all they will do is perpetuate the creeping political correctness that is flowing into the Churches of God.

Like sleeper cells, they hide these alternative views to enable themselves to be ordained. Once ordained, they gradually slip in these views, protected by their pals.

The outcome is apostasy or a variation of it.

Or should this be considered/done prior to ordination?

1. members be alerted to whom they are considering for deaconship
2. ask for feedback in a formal way (eg forms, open analysis, appeal process)
3. they are properly investigated for doctrine
4. they are properly investigated for character.

**How are deacons chosen?**

The Scriptures show that a methodology be practiced:

> “And let them [prospective deacons] also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” (ITim 3:10) See also IThess 5:21; IJohn 4:1 lest we have a Jer 12:10 type situation!

How do you test them prior to ordination? One way is to ask the members who are NOT related or personal friends or in their clique/inner circle. It is a no brainer! As well as give them serious jobs of service to do and see if they consistently fulfill them. Not sermonettes or Bible studies or the arrangement of a few socials (anyone can do these very easily). Instead serving and sacrificing for
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Those in need such as those a bit different, the elderly and disabled. Some organise events to ‘get the vote’ so to speak. After their appointment, isn’t it just amazing how they no longer perform those sorts of services?

Note: Friends and relatives are not supposed to test them! Or be asked if such-and-such should be ordained.

UCG’s paper Godly Governance states:

“The account of Acts 6 is a striking parallel to what Moses did with Israel. In Deuteronomy 1:13, recounting the events of Exodus 18, he said, “Choose wise, understanding and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.” In both the Old and New Testament we see a collaborative process in which the “laity” had a major preliminary role in nominating people for certain positions, but the final decision rested with the appointed leader or leaders.

The entire process in Acts 6 blended the principles of consensus, gaining input from the brethren, then sanctioning their input by the laying on of hands. We see structure, organization, procedure, involvement and ratification. The apostles expressed confidence toward the membership, and the members in turn toward the apostles. In this first governmental issue in the Church we see first the acknowledgment of God’s will, then wisdom in problem-solving, concession that no one person or group had all the answers, respect for the members and submission to the spiritual leaders who had the final say. All in all, it was a well-handled process that God blessed—“the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly” (verse 7). Presumably, their physical needs were well attended from then on, overseen by these seven, generally acknowledged to be the first deacons.” (pages 25-26)

So how is this policy meant to be implemented?

What does deacon mean and do?

They are servants of the church – in fact the Greek word means or infers to be a table waiter. Cp Acts 6:1-7.

They are servants that tend to the needs of others, especially the widows, orphans, lonely etc. This was explained in old WCG sermonettes – but we have gotten away from this now.

In other words, it is a lifetime of sacrifice to serve the under-privileged which means sacrifice! Yes, sacrificing their time, their cliques, aspects of their business etc in service to God and man. If sacrifice is too difficult to execute based on their character (ongoing, historical behaviours), they should not be ordained or allow themselves to be – lest they meet the wrath of God.

Their service and self-sacrifice are commonly known as ‘mercy ministries’ by helping the under-privileged such as the orphans and widows; the lonely and rejected; those a little quirky. Their primary role is not teaching or formal instruction though that is permissible. Overwhelmingly they are meant to be servants to the under-privileged – to do that they must sacrifice their cliques and inner circles as well as their own personal time. That is rather hard to do, not so? (cp James 1:27)
They are there to sit down with and understand the needs of others, including their emotional needs. To feed and shelter members physically and emotionally. Their role is FAR more than just hall set up, socials and sermonettes – after all anyone can do those.

Unfortunately, when bad appointments are made, the following happens:

1. They are installed for life and it is very difficult to modify their behaviours and to be removed
2. Their friends keep on backing them up regardless
3. Those most affected are not listened to and may leave the Church due to the abuse or neglect
4. As supervision is minimal, they fill an office, but do not fulfil it.

Notice:

“... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.” (ICor 12:25)

“I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out [KJV= avoid] for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. [ie those that do not care for others are causing division]

For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. [cp Dan 11:34]

For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.” (Rom 16:17-19)

“... that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.” (Rom 1:12)

So, by not caring for others properly is causing division!

**What a deacon is not**

How many understand and practice this?

1. It is not a step up the ladder to become an elder
2. It is not a position of rulership
3. It is not a teaching position (though they can teach). Given the similarity between positions and offices in the synagogue and the early Church, it should be noted that the synagogue had teachers whom, apparently, were not formal ordinations but permitted to use their skill.
4. It is not to be used to further one’s ambitions and to cement one’s position or their friends
5. It is not a place to jealously prevent others from using their spiritual gifts and talents.

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.” (James 3:14-15)
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**Concluding Remarks: What happens if one does not fulfill his position as a deacon?**

Some fill such a position but do not fulfill it.

Why are they not being supervised and have annual reviews to see how they are tracking? In the synagogue, they had 1, 2 or 3 years terms often-times.

If they do not perform, they should be worked with and warned. If they don’t measure up, they MUST be let go. So that the Church can thrive.

The responsibilities and services of deacons is a very serious business. Are they up to it? **Now that we are aware what a Deacon really does, do those that seek this office still want to be one?**

"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, [how? Answer:] learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause [or anyone underprivileged or in need. If you do this, then this is the outcome:]. 

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." (Is 1:17-19)