

Deacons of the Church

What are deacons? Who are they? What is their place in the Lord's church? The inspired gospel of Christ reveals a special group of men identified as "*deacons*," who were chosen to serve in the church. This Biblical term in English is actually a transliteration of a Greek word in the New Testament, which primarily means "*servant*." Although this particular Greek word for "servant" is used to refer to domestic servants (John 2:5), civil rulers (Rom. 13:4), ministers of Christ (Col. 1:7; 4:7) and even Christ Himself (Rom. 15:8), this term *deacon* or *servant* is also used to describe men in Christ appointed particularly to serve in the church where they are known and respected for their exemplary character (1 Tim. 3:10).

Deacons of the church are not the same group of spiritual men identified as elders and overseers who shepherd the congregation. Both overseers and deacons ministered in the church in Philippi (Phil. 1:1). The Holy Spirit guided Paul to instruct the evangelist Timothy to teach regarding the approved character overseers and deacons must possess prior to their appointments (1 Tim. 3:1-13). The differences in the required qualifications infer the distinctiveness of their roles. The apostle Peter directed elders to shepherd and to serve as overseers (I Pet. 5:1-2), NOT deacons. Deacons are not the elders, overseers or pastors of the church.

Not every Christian may serve as a deacon to the church. The Lord has designated the level of spiritual maturity and familial leadership a man must have attained before being selected and accepting the privileged opportunity to become a special servant to the church (1 Tim. 3:8-13). A man's character and relationships must be evaluated and held up against the Lord's standard. The congregation must determine if he is blameless or without accusations regarding the Lord's stipulations. We are not at liberty to change the church's organization, which Christ the Head has authorized.

Having met the Lord's high standard, such men of faith are qualified to serve in the church in whatever area the church has need for their services. Their work must be defined and limited by what the Scriptures reveal the church is to be doing. If a particular matter is not an approved work of Christ's church, then deacons ought not be assigned to devote themselves to those unauthorized tasks.

Their work has spiritual implications. The required qualifications identify spiritual strengths. The thrust and focus of the church is spiritual. Therefore, their service is to assist and labor expediently in the spiritual well being of the members of the congregation. Yes, there will be physical tasks to be completed, but deacons' responsibilities are much more than cleaning, repairing and maintaining the church's real estate. Deacons are exemplary servants of Christ in the kingdom, who "*obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith*" when they have served well.