

Calvary Baptist Church

Deacon Statement

Serving the church up, over, and out.

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12/3/2011

THE OFFICE OF DEACON

THE PURPOSE OF THE DEACONATE IS TO PROMOTE THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH THROUGH SUPPORTING THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND PRAYER BY SERVING AS RESPONSIBLE MANAGERS OF PARTICULAR MINISTRIES IN PLACE OF THE PASTORAL TEAM.

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE DEACONATE

A Look at Acts 6

1. The issue:

Churches have problems. Churches have problems because churches are made up of people. And the people that make up the church are sinners. Sinners saved by the grace of God and changing by his sanctifying power, but sinners no the less. Yet without people though there is no church, so solutions to problems are important. The apostles demonstrate their awareness of the issue and its need to be solved. The issue at hand involved two ethnically distinct groups of widows, people from one ethnic group felt their widows were not being cared for while the other ethnic group's widows were getting the care that they needed (Acts 6:1).

2. The concern:

The apostles had a concern and it was not the issue of the "daily distribution" (Acts 6:1). Rather, their main concern was the necessity to lay aside their primary task of preaching and prayer to meet a managerial need in the church. Now this managerial need was not unimportant in the least, it affected the very unity of the early church in Jerusalem. The scale of this issue is also noted in the understanding that it would have taken a great amount of the apostles' time and effort to deal with this need. But, it is not the scale of it, nor the importance of it that had the apostles concern. It was the priority of it in relation to their office. Functioning as the pastoral leaders of the early church in Jerusalem their priority was clear, devotion "to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4) took precedent over the issue and another solution (besides them managing it themselves) had to be sought out.

3. The solution:

Here we are presented with the office of deacon. The apostles' concern regarding the neglect of the word and prayer is solved by appointing "men of good repute, full

of the Spirit and of wisdom ... to this duty” (Acts 6:3). These men were given the task to manage the issue at hand of “the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1), described as “to serve tables” (Acts 6:2). Carson is helpful in describing what this entails:

The contrast between prayer and the ministry of the word on the one hand and to wait on tables on the other should not be read as meaning that one task is inferior to the other. In many modern cultures, the phrase ‘waiting on tables’ brings to mind servants or hired help at restaurants. This image is wrong in several ways. For one thing, it is the job of the head of the household to distribute the food (thus Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper of taking, blessing, breaking and distributing; Lk. 22:19; cf. 9:16 and 24:30). Furthermore, the word used here for ‘table’ has two special meanings: the dining table and also a money-changer’s table (Mk. 11:15; the same word is used in the sense of ‘bank’ in Lk. 19:23). Thus it may be that ‘to sit at managers’ desks’ is as valid a paraphrase of the text as ‘to wait on tables’. Although the passage mentions food, the distribution may well have been in form of money for food, and certainly in 4:35–37 it was money which the apostles received towards this aid. Such an interpretation would also fit better with the gifts required of the Seven: as well as being full of the Spirit, they would need wisdom in their management roles.¹

These men truly were servants (which is the literal translation of the Greek *diavkonoß*(*diakonos*), from which we get "deacon"), and their service was to give responsible managerial care to a particular ministry in need of such care. Unlike the eldership (which the apostles were functioning as in Acts 6) the deacons are to “attend to the practical details of church life such as administration, maintenance, and the care of church members with physical needs.”²

¹ Carson, D. A. *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition* (4th ed.) Inter-Varsity Press.: Downers Grove. 1994. (Ac 6:1–8:3).

²Capitol Hill Baptist Church. “Living as a Church, Class 5: Church Governance: Godly Authority Fostering Unity”. Washington D.C. 2006. (5).

The Deaconate: Leadership in the Church

As we look at Scripture to find the ecclesiological structure of the church we see it clearly laid out in Philippians 1:1.

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

This verse informs us that the church is comprised of three groups: *First*, there are the saints of whom everyone is a part of, this refers to the congregation. Then *second*, there are the overseers, or pastors. And *third*, there are the deacons.

But whose idea was it to have deacons? Well one could argue that it was Paul's idea since he penned the letter to the church at Philippi, but our understanding of the production of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) leads us to contribute the idea to someone greater behind Paul's writing. We should know that the idea of the church was God's idea (Matthew 16:18) and along with it he ordained that the church would have deacons. The office of deacon is a gift from God to the church and I would go further to say that you, serving in the office of deacon, are a gift from God to Calvary Baptist Church.

We did not choose three because it was easier for us; we have three aspects of church governance because it is biblical. This in turn puts great importance on the roles of overseer and deacon, it's not like these roles are one of twenty other leadership roles. These are the two leadership roles presented to us by God, through his Scripture, for his church.

Both of these roles, though distinct from each other, are vitally important. God ordained these two offices and while the overseers and deacons are a part of the saints in the church they are distinct in some of their functions.

Deacon leadership has specific characteristics, four are highlighted here.

1. SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The office is one of leadership and yet the leadership of the deaconate is different in its function than the leadership of the eldership. The deacons' leading of the church is not done by means of deliberation or decision, nor by teaching or preaching. The primary means of deaconate leadership is through serving before and beside the congregation. Deacons are to be an example of how each church member is to be serving in the church. Their distinction comes in the recognition given them, in their office and title, by the church that these members stand out as true examples

of godliness and servanthood. As deacons, your serving is your leadership. Each opportunity and task in which you rise to the occasion and serve is a moment in which you lead the church in greater acts of service.

2. UNIFYING LEADERSHIP

One question we should ask is, “Why does the church need the deaconate?” Take a look at Ephesians 4:15-16:

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

While the text does not explicitly speak of the deaconate, it does speak of it implicitly when it says: “each part.” The deaconate is one of the parts that make up the body of the church. And what is the broad purpose of the deaconate, just like every other part of the church body? To make “the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” All the gifts God gives to the church, and there are many, are for the building up of the church.³ One such gift is the office of deacon.

A major part that the deacons play in building up the church is found in their ability to promote unity. Their godly service has an effect on the church that quells quarrels, silences complaining, and defuses disagreements all of which would result in disunity. Yet the deaconate is one of God’s main tools to keep the peace and preserve the unity.

Their work among the widows in Acts 6 was important because the physical neglect of the Grecian widows was causing spiritual disunity within the church. One group of Christians was beginning to complain against the other group and in a particularly dangerous way – along cultural lines. This seems to be what, in particular, caught the attention of the apostles. In attending to all of the widows, the deacons defused the situation and preserved the unity.⁴

As such, deacons care for the church as a whole, and all the members of the church. One should not underestimate the important of keeping this mindset. Many dangers

³ Also see Romans 1:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12; 14:12, 26; 1 Peter 4:10.

⁴Capitol Hill Baptist Church. “Living as a Church, Class 5: Church Governance: Godly Authority Fostering Unity”. Washington D.C. 2006. (5).

result from a mentality that is only self-serving to a particular ministry. The larger mission of the church must be kept in focus with each ministry being a means to that end. Each deacon promoting unity within their particular ministries is a direct application of Acts 6.

3. SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP

For pastoral ministry to be effective the Apostles believed it was necessary to formulate the diaconate. The main focus of pastoral ministry is the ministry of the Word and prayer. These two essential parts must therefore be the main focus of each elder. This being said, we must realize that not all ministry done in church is ministry of the Word and prayer specifically. Yet, if we understand the argument of the Apostles, all ministry is done to support the specific ministry of the Word and prayer. Why do we have microphones, computers, powerpoints, videos and websites? Why do we make handouts, marketing materials, and bulletins? Why do we have a building, bathrooms, and a nursery? Why do we have a budget, differing funds, and electric bills? Such things are not ends in and of themselves, but supports to a greater cause. If we neglect the greater cause of ministering the Word and prayer then all the other ministries lose their relevance. And if we neglect the other ministries we could potentially set up substantial stumbling blocks to the ministry of the Word and prayer. As deacon, you have a unique position by which you lead in the efforts to support this Word and prayer ministry. Deacons allow elders to devote their time in particular to the ministry of the word and prayer by managing supporting ministries delegated by the pastoral team. Another way of saying this is that deacons absorb (like shocks in a car) support level ministries from the elders.

4. MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP

Managers work, but they also manage others in their work. The idea of management necessitates the effort of distributing work throughout the church. As a manager, deacons facilitate ministry through:

- a. Responsibility: it gets done.

A deacon should feel the responsibility of his particular ministry. The understanding of his role in this ministry should be that if he doesn't get this done, no one will. Now this does not mean he is meant to do everything entailed in this ministry, rather that he is the driving force behind this ministry. If the website is to be current, if bills are to be paid on time, if the roof is to be fixed, if the light bulbs are to be changed, if the microphones are

to be ready, or if the church is to be clean then someone has to be thinking about it, focused on it, intent on that task and that ministry being accomplished. And how does one know if a deacon is serving well? Things get done.

b. Development: it gets done better.

But serving well is not only about getting things done. It is the deacon's role to be aware of the developing needs in the church, specifically in the area of ministry to which he has been assigned. For the pastoral team to keep their focus primarily on their task, it would mean that pastors must be convinced that the deacons are actively involved in their ministry, knowing the necessary actions in the present to fulfill their responsibilities as well as planning for future needs, both preventative and progressive in nature. Whoever is constantly aware of the ministry, making sure appropriate steps are actually taken is the one who is managing, so Deacons should be developmental managers of their ministries. Communication and coordination with the pastoral team will be essential in unified development of ministries.

c. Training: it gets done by others.

The desired result is to have a ministry, not dependent on any one person – pastor, deacon, or otherwise – but one done by various parts of the body working together. Here, the deacon's full role of manager comes into fruition. Training is at its core an opportunity for discipleship and to promote the unity of the body. Each ministry should seek to accomplish its goals in community, as a team. Therefore, each deacon should have a team of people committed to ministering together for the common good of the church. No ministry is too small or insignificant for a team dynamic within the church. The team may consist of twenty or two, but it is a team as it has more than one. You will find that perfect team members for your ministry are hard to come by in most cases. This should be as no surprise as each of us should readily admit that perfect pastors and deacons are hard to come by as well. Thus the title, "training" for this section. You will have to pursue people and help them see the importance of your ministry. You will have to lead people by showing them how to do ministry. You will have to walk beside people and do the ministry together. You will have to release people and let them do what they have learned, make mistakes, fail, and try again. You will have to manage people by being there for them, by instructing them, by correcting them, by training them. It is the deacon's role to

incorporate other members of the body into active service. The deacon has an understanding of the ministry and the ability to communicate that understanding to others. He recruits, trains, and serves alongside members thereby fostering unity in the body and a servant's spirit among the congregation.

Deacons coordinate volunteers for particular needed ministries in the church such as providing rides for the elderly or setting up for refreshments on Sunday mornings. This promotes unity in two ways: (1) it prevents a disproportionate amount of work from falling on just a few members; and (2) it enables all members to have the opportunity to participate in the joy of serving others.⁵

In some cases this training will be in essence a working yourself out of a job. You will be able to turn the management over to another member of the church. This will then free you up to alleviate another aspect of ministry from the pastoral team. Therefore, all deacons are ministry managers, but not all ministry managers are deacons.

Aspects for Clarification

The deacon's managerial authority is delegated by the pastoral team. This is evidenced in Acts 6, as the Apostles were turning over the distribution ministry to the deaconate. This means that the deacons are submissive to the leadership of the pastoral team. At times it might be helpful for the pastoral team to ask a deacon to change ministries or manage distinct aspects of a ministry. Deacons should not see this as a usurping of their authority as the responsibility of management is delegated to them by the pastoral team. In response, an elder should be slow to move a deacon from their specific ministry, understanding the time and effort put in. Also, an elder should give clear reasoning and ample time for adjustment so that all things may be done decently and in order.

The deaconate is not a deliberative body. We believe that scripture clearly presents the deliberative aspect of the church life falling upon the eldership, with certain specific items such as the electing of leadership, the approval of membership, and the exercise of church discipline being placed on the deliberation of the congregation. As such the deaconate has no deliberating capability in and of themselves. On occasion the pastoral team may seek

⁵Capitol Hill Baptist Church. "Living as a Church, Class 5: Church Governance: Godly Authority Fostering Unity". Washington D.C. 2006. (6).

advice for the deaconate or use the deaconate as a sounding board for new ideas.⁶In doing this the pastoral team is not requesting that the deaconate take on deliberative responsibilities, and as such should not feel responsible should their advice be taken or marginalized should their advice be rejected.

This does not mean that the deaconate is without its share of decision-making. A manager must make decisions and since deacons function as managers, they will need to make decisions. These decisions are within the confines of their specific ministries and based on a delegation of pastoral authority. Anytime a deacon feels his decision-making might fall outside of his delegated authority, he should seek leadership and guidance from the pastoral team.

Summarization

A DEACON IS TO SERVE THE CHURCH UP, OVER, AND OUT.

1. A deacon serves up – supports the pastoral team and their ministry of the Word and prayer. Your taking responsibility for specific ministries frees up elders to give more time to their specific ministries. It is the expression of an “I can do this so the pastors don’t have to” spirit.
2. A deacon serves over – manages support-type ministries through responsibility, development, and training.
3. A deacon serves out – provides an example of service and facilitates membership service that promotes unity. This also includes the concept of involving other in the ministry so that each member is serving in the church and the idea of working yourself out of a job by passing on the role of management to faithful and able team members.

⁶ This would be in keeping with Proverb 15:22.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Four Characteristics of a Godly Leader:

1. Faithfulness

Leadership is not something that should be taken lightly. Ultimately, as deacon you bear responsibility to God for your service and responsibility to God for the health and function of the church. These are not small things, so my encouragement to you is to demonstrate faithfulness. That is what the qualifications are about, a deacon is one who has shown to take his life as a Christian seriously and therefore will take the office of deacon seriously and be able to fulfill the role of this office faithfully, as he has sought to faithfully live his life as a Christian.

Therefore demonstrate faithfulness. Be at church meetings and functions, call people when you say you will, and own the tasks given to you. This is God's will for you, accept it, embrace it, and do it.

2. Unity

Leadership should promote unity. This means that your service should help to silence complaining and arguing. You then, have a big part in dealing with complaining. You need to shut it down, kill the reason of complaining, find a solution, tell people to talk to the person they struggle with, tell them not to talk to other who cannot solve it (gossip). Instead of taking sides or washing your hands of the issue, these time are opportunities to serve the body of Christ.

Therefore promote unity. Jump into service with other members: like serving at the dinners (love feast) by cleaning up afterwards and invite someone to do it with you. Say "come do this with me." Start promoting unity by not being a complainer yourself, rather be a participant and call them to do the same. Be willing to nip complaining in the bud, be gentle but without fear.

3. Humility

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:29-30)

Like John the Baptist we should respond with great humility as we serve in part of God's program. We have to accept the role that God has given each of us and allow Jesus to increase in exaltation through our humble service. We should be evaluating our actions and looking skeptically at our motives and desires to keep ourselves from being the means by which sin enters the church. You should have a lowly

opinion of yourself, you should be humbled by how little you are compared to Jesus and that should cause you to exalt him all the more and serve him all the more.

Therefore exemplify humility. Be willing then to serve, not viewing yourself as the honorable guest, but the as a joyful servant to Jesus Christ. Jump in to set up and take down tables as much as organizing events; get the toilet fixed as much as figuring out the budget; while doing the tasks fitting leadership, be ready to humbly serve in areas of immediate need – for your service is leadership.

4. Relational

Ministry is not just a program or task. The church is filled with people, with lives like yours; lives filled with joys and sorrows, highs and lows, healing and hurt, and when you are serving the church you are serving these people. As such a leader should be motivated out of love for people to serve:

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Our society doesn't seem to have a problem with developing attachments; they're just in meaningless areas. People are more attached to people on tv and movies, in books and such than real people. The church should be different, valuing real people, real relationships, showing real love. So much so that we are incarnating the sacrifice and suffering of Christ. That's what Paul seeks to do and so should we.

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, (Colossians 1:24)

Therefore be relational. Know people in the church and on your team, know them as people who need to hear your voice, people who need to know more than your name, people who desire to experience Christ's love through a person, through you. Ask God to give you love for them, a desire to share your life with them. Then do stuff with them. Serve with them, but also watch the game with them. They're people, it takes time and effort to build relationships, but they are worth it.

DEACON QUALIFICATIONS

⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. (Acts 6:3)

“In 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Paul spells out to Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus, what these deacons should be like. Combining the characteristics listed there with the qualities of those selected in Acts 6, we can certainly say that those who serve us as deacons should be known to be full of the Holy Spirit (because though concerned with physical things, theirs is certainly a spiritual ministry). These deacons should be known to be full of wisdom. They should be chosen by the congregation, with the congregation’s confidence. They should willingly and diligently take on the responsibility for the particular needs their ministry is meant to serve. They should be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, not pursuing dishonest gain, keeping hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience, tested and approved servants who are the husband of but one wife and who manage their own children and household well.”⁷

Biblical Requirements for Deacons:

1 Timothy 3:8-13 outlines a clear set of qualifications for deacons. All who wish to serve as deacons in the church must meet these criteria.⁸

1. **A Respectable Man** –*dignified* – Men worthy of respect, who are honorable, noble, and highly esteemed; men whom younger Christians want to be like. His life should be one that seeks to live in submission to God as an example to follow. His heart should be one that is categorized by choosing wisdom and discernment not foolishness and rebellion.

⁷ Mark Dever. *A Display of God's Glory*. Center for Church Reform: Washington D.C. 2001. (13).

⁸ Some adaption from: Bob Thune. *Deacons: A Theological Study*. Coram Deo: Omaha. 2007. (7-8).

2. **A Sincere Man** – *not double-tongued* – Men who are sincere, honest, and truthful; careful in speech. His life should be one that seeks to speak honestly about God, himself, and others. His heart should be one that is categorized by a desire to please God not just to please men.
3. **A Sober Man** – *not addicted to much wine* – Men not indulging in, or with no addictions; self-controlled in habits. His life should be one that seeks to live in control of his faculties not as a drunkard. His heart should be one that is categorized by a pleasure found in God not a worshipper of selfish pleasure.
4. **A Charitable Man** – *not greedy for dishonest gain* – Men not “in it for the money” (i.e. aren’t serving in hopes of eventually getting paid by the church). His life should be one that seeks to live as a good steward of his finances with integrity. His heart should be one that is categorized by a trust in God’s plan and is not greedy, covetous, deceitful, and unbelieving.
5. **A Godly Man** – *they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience* – Men who hold to sound theology; understand the gospel; no discrepancy between what they profess and how they live. His life should be one that seeks to understand God’s Word and ways then live by them. His heart should be one that is categorized by a desire for an intimate relationship with God, is convicted of his sinfulness, and changes rather than being stubborn and rebellious.
6. **A Tested Man** – *let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless* – Men proved faithful over time; stand up under examination. His life should be one that seeks to live openly and accountably. His heart should be one that is categorized by humility not pride.
7. **A Pure Man** – *the husband of one wife* – Men who are a one-woman man; faithful to their wife; sexually pure. His life should be one that seeks to live committed to the purity of his marriage vows. His heart should be one that is categorized by faithfulness and loyalty not unfaithfulness and disloyalty, by love not selfishness and lust.
8. **A Leading Man** – *managing their children and their own households well* – Men who lead, manage, and provide for his family; kids respect and obey their father. His life should be one that seeks to lead wife and children in spiritual growth, this being evidenced by their behavior. His heart should be one that is categorized by courageous and loving actions not cowardly or selfish.

Biblical Requirements for Wives of Deacons:

- 1) **A Respectable Woman** –*dignified* – Women worthy of respect, noble, honorable; women whom younger Christians want to emulate.
- 2) **A Sincere Woman** –*not slanderers* – Women who are not malicious talkers or gossips.
- 3) **A Sober Woman** – *sober-minded* – Women who are temperate and clear-minded; self-controlled in habits.
- 4) **A Faithful Woman** – *faithful in all things* – Women who are trustworthy in everything; totally reliable; doing well in all life roles (wife, mother, etc.).

EXPECTATIONS AS DEACONS OF CBC

General Expectations

1. Take unhurried time with God each day.
2. Model our vision, mission, and core values.
3. Give attention to your marriage and family.
4. Work hard and take a day of rest.
5. Give sacrificially and cheerfully to Calvary Baptist Church.
6. Be a avid learner and continuous improver.
7. Prioritize church meeting and functions. Be punctual. Be present for Sunday services (30 minutes before the service starts, 30 minutes after it is over. This is important ministry time.).
8. Participate in your small group so authentic community is experienced.

Specific Expectations

9. Manage specific ministries.
 - a. Commit an average of 5 hours weekly for ministry management.
 - b. Show responsibility – It gets done.
 - c. Plan development – It gets done better.
 - d. Give training – It gets done by others.
10. Lead your ministry team. Always serve with someone.
11. Respond quickly and efficiently when emergencies and crises situations arise. Take responsibility and see that it gets done.
12. Prioritize deacon training meeting and team meetings. Be punctual
13. Report to your assigned elder.