

=THE BOOK OF ACTS=

Lesson 6

The First Deacons - Acts 6

AIM: to teach my pupils what the Bible has to say about the office of deacon.

POINT OF CONTACT: See how many of our deacons the class members can name. You might even want to pass out paper and see who can win, giving a little prize to the one who names the most.

INTRODUCTION: One of the best ways to learn the book of Acts is to learn particular titles for each chapter of that book. For example, Acts 1 should be “The Ascension;” Acts 2, “Pentecost;” Acts 3, “The Healing of the Lame Man;” Acts 4, “The First Persecution;” Acts 5, “Ananias and Sapphira;” Acts 6, “The First Deacons.”

I. THE PURPOSE OF DEACONS. Read Acts 6:1, 4.

1. The deacons were chosen to stop murmuring. Some murmuring or complaining had arisen in the church, and the deacons had begun to perform duties to alleviate this. Deacons should constantly be trying to stop murmuring, criticisms and gossip in the church. This was one of the reasons for their existence. There were two groups in the church—the Jews and the Greeks. The church had become so large that the Grecians felt that the Grecian widows were not getting a fair share of the food, etc. when it was distributed. They began to complain. Because of this, the first deacons were chosen.
2. The deacons were chosen to help the poor. The word “deacon” comes from a Greek word meaning “servant,” which comes from the word meaning, “to be of the dust.” The words, “dust,” “servant” and “deacon” all seem to come from the same root words. Hence, the office of deacon is not an elevated position that should rule the church, but rather a position as servant of the church. You will notice this in the last part of verse 1, “...their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.”
3. The deacons were chosen to help the pastors. The deacons were to take care of things that the pastors requested them to do and to be an aid to them.
4. The deacons were not a governing body or an official board of the church. The proper purpose of deacons is to seek out the way the church should go and then make recommendations to the church body, who alone has power to decide concerning the business affairs of the church.

II. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE DEACONS.

1. They were men of honest report. In Acts 6:3a, we see that these were honest men. They paid their debts. Their word was as good as their signature, and their signature was as good as gold.
2. They were full of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 6:3b, notice the words, “full of the Holy Ghost.” The office of deacon is a spiritual one. One should not even be considered because he has a good position or is a civic or social leader or is well educated or has business sense. It is a spiritual matter, and deacons are to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. They had wisdom. Notice Acts 6:3c. These men were wise men, not men who were novices, but rather, men of spiritual wisdom and discernment.
4. These were men who were serious-minded. In I Timothy 3:8b, notice the words, “grave.” This does not mean they did not have fun, but it means they were men of discernment and spiritual insight who could see the depth and importance of the work of the Lord.
5. These men were not gossips. In I Timothy 3:8b, notice the words, “not doubletongued.” The word, “doubletongued,” means “talking one way to somebody’s face and another way behind his back.” This would include gossip, criticism, etc. One who gossips and is critical is not qualified to be a deacon.
6. A deacon should not be a glutton. In I Timothy 3:8c, notice the words, “not given to much wine.” Wine in the Bible does not necessarily mean intoxicating beverage. It often means “fruit of the vine” or simply “grape juice.” The teaching here, of course, is that a person should not drink intoxicating beverages. More than that, it would mean that the deacon should be temperate in all things. He should not overeat. He should not be a man of excesses, but a man of temperance.

7. The deacon should not be greedy of filthy lucre. This is found in I Timothy 3:8d. The deacon is to give God what is His, pay his debts, work hard, and make an honest living.
8. The deacon is to be proved and tested. See I Timothy 3:10a.
9. The deacon should not be a hypocrite. Read I Timothy 3:10b. This does not mean that the deacon will not be criticized, but it means that, when it is all said and done, criticism should be false, and that his life should be in keeping with his testimony and the Word of God.
10. The deacon's wife must also meet Bible qualifications. Many men are not qualified to be deacons because of their wives. Let us notice this:
 - 1) The wife should be serious-minded and wise. In I Timothy 3:11a, note the word, "grave."
 - 2) The wife is not to be a slanderer. See I Timothy 3:11b. A gossiping wife, a critical wife, a slandering wife would disqualify a man from being a Bible deacon.
 - 3) The wife is to be sober. (I Timothy 3:11c)
 - 4) The wife is to be faithful. In I Timothy 3:11d, see the words, "faithful in all things." The deacon and his wife both should be faithful to all the services of the church and to the work of Christ.
11. The deacon is to be the husband of one wife. (I Timothy 3:12a) The scholars are divided as to exactly what this means. Some say that it means a man who is divorced and remarried cannot be a deacon. Still others say that it means one wife at a time; in other words, a deacon should not be guilty of polygamy, which was practiced by man in the early days. To be safe, we at First Baptist Church have followed the former, though we are not dogmatic about it, and are certainly not critical of people who have had unfortunate circumstances in their lives.
12. The deacon must have authority over his children and his wife. (I Timothy 3:12b) A henpecked man is not qualified to be a deacon; neither is a man qualified if his children do not mind.
13. The deacon should realize the importance of his position. I Timothy 3:13. The office of the deacon is one of the two Bible offices. The other is the Pastor. The Pastor is the overseer of the church; the deacons are the servants of the church, seeking to help any place where needed and fulfill the purpose of Acts 6. They are to be helpers to the Pastor and servants of the people, especially the needy.

III. THE TYPE OF DEACONS CHOSEN BY THE EARLY CHURCH. It is interesting that in the same chapter where the deacons are chosen, we find the story of one of the deacons.

1. Stephen was the deacon aforementioned. Read about Stephen in Acts 6:5, 8-15. Acts 7 tells us that he was preaching. Hence, we find that Bible deacons preached. The same was true with Philip in Acts 8:5. Deacons were ready to preach at any opportunity. A person doesn't have to be called to be a pastor to preach the Gospel, and deacons certainly should be ready to preach at any time the opportunity presents itself.
2. Philip was also a deacon, (Acts 6:5) and a wonderful story is told about his being a personal soul winner in Acts 8:26-40. Every deacon should be a personal soul winner. The example is given by Philip.
3. The first martyr in the Book of Acts was a deacon; hence, deacons should be willing to give their lives for Jesus Christ.

IV. THE RESULT OF THE ELECTION OF DEACONS. (Acts 6:7) It is interesting that the election of these men increased the number of believers, and revival was evident. The right kind of deacon will help the church to grow and reach more people for Jesus Christ.

V. WHAT TO DO CONCERNING OUR DEACONS.

1. Let us have a prayer for God's blessing upon our deacons before we leave the class.
2. See if there are members of a deacons' family in your class. If so, honor them as being family members of a deacon in our church.
3. Encourage the boys who are growing up in our church to aspire to be a deacon or a pastor. Teach them to start even now living the kind of life that would qualify them to be a deacon some day.