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The Deacon's Relationship to the Pastor

Introduction: During the infant stages of growth, the newly formed church at Jerusalem found itself under the leadership and oversight of the apostles (Acts 6). While the apostleship was a unique office, the apostles also carried out the function of pastor during this time of transition (Note Peter and John's referral to themselves as "elders" - I Pet. 5:1; II John 1). Therefore, Acts 6:1-7, which describes a relationship between deacons (servants) and apostles, also offers principles describing the relationship between the deacon and the pastor.

Acts 6:1-7

I. The Deacon is to Relieve the Pastor of Mundane Responsibility (v. 2).

A. His service is to meet the church's material (temporal) needs. "Serve tables" = to distribute charities.

1. Specifically = to disburse money in meeting needs of poor and distressed.

2. General extended application - to see that the pastor(s) receives competent financial support (I Tim. 5:17-18), to see that church expenses are paid, to superintend church budget, to function as church trustees and treasurer, and to maintain church building and property.

B. His service will promote church peace and unity (v. 1 "murmuring") .

C. His service will promote church growth.

(NOTE: The office of deacon is not merely to remove pastoral responsibility, but to allow the pastor to fulfill his proper responsibility).

1. Spiritual growth
   a. Pastor can continue in prayer and ministry of the Word (v. 4).
   b. The Word of God will spread ("increased" v. 7).

2. Numerical growth (v. 7) - "the number of the disciples multiplied."

III. Deacons are chosen (specifically) to handle the <u>monetary</u> matters of the church ("serve tables" - v. 2 - cp In. 2:15 - "tables" of money).

A. Specifically - to disburse money In meeting needs of poor and distressed.

B. General extended application - to See that church expenses are paid, to superintend church budget, to function as church trustees and treasurer, and to maintain church building and property.

NOTE: This duty demands that a deacon have "dignity" and not be "greedy of filthy lucre" (I Tim. 3:8).

IV. Deacons are chosen to alleviate the pastor of duties so he can fulfill his own responsibilities (v. 2, 4).

A. By their service they aid him in his devotion to his ministry (v. 2, 4).

B. By their service they aid in the furtherance of the Gospel (v. 7).

C. By their service they aid In the salvation of souls (v. 7).

<u>I Timothy 3:8-13</u>

I. Deacons are <u>Examples</u> of Spirituality to the Assembly (v. 8-9, 13).

"Examples" = "good degree" (standing in eyes of church - i.e. reputation; v. 13). "great boldness" (able to speak confidently about his faith in Jesus Christ; v. 13 - cp Acts 7, 8)

A. In lifestyle (serious - v. 8a).
B. In speech (truthful, trustworthy - v. 8b).
C. In appetites (ex. "wine" - v. 8c).
D. In ambitions (ex. "not greedy . . . . lucre" - v. 8d).
E. In consistency (belief is matched by life resulting in pure conscience - v. 9).
F. In respectability (reputation and influence - v. IJ).

II. Deacons are to be Examined for Spirituality by the Assembly (v. 10-12).

"Examined" – "Let these also first be proved" – v.10.

Approval of nominees comes after testing (examining) is done by the assembly and the pastor (cp. Acts 6:6).

A. The church is to make sure that his life is irreproachable (v. 10 & 8-9).

B. The church is to make sure that his wife's character matches his. (v. 11)

C. The church is to make sure that he is faithful to his marriage (v. 12a).

D. The church is to make sure that he is the leader of his home (v. 12b).

General Principles of Relationship

Most occurrences in the New Testament of the word "diakonos" (servant) (and words related to it) have a general meaning related to service and do not refer specifically to the church office of "deacon." However, they do offer general principles that describe the relationship between the servant and the one(s) served. The word "diakonos" is the title of "servant;" "diakonia" is the function of "service"; and "diakoneo" describes the act of "serving."

1. Serving is an expression of selfless sacrifice (Mt. 20:28).

2. Serving Christ's children is serving Christ (Mt. 25:44).

3. Serving Christ coincides with following Christ (Mk. 15:41; Jn. 12:26)

4. Serving involves the expenditure of one's personal means (Lk. 8:3).

5. Serving assumes the position of humble submission (Lk. 22: 24-27; Mt. 23:10-12).

6. Serving involves obedience with humility (Jn. 2:5; Acts 19:22)

7. Serving involves meeting the physical needs of the saints (II Cor. 9:1, 12, 13; Rom. 15:25-31).

8. Serving involves meeting the spiritual needs of the lost (I Cor. 3:5) .

9. Serving is performed with honesty (integrity) (II Cor. 8:19-21).

10. Serving is performed with consistency and diligence (II Tim. 1:16-18; cp I Cor. 16:15-16).

11. Serving involves hospitality (with proper attitude and impartiality) (Acts 21:8; I Pet. 4:9-10).

12. Serving is accomplished according to God-given ability (Acts 11:29; Rom. 12:7; I Pet. 4:11).

13. Serving is not motivated by monetary reward (II Cor. 11: 7-9).

14. Serving is the goal of every saint (Eph. 4:12).

15. Serving is not accomplished till the task is fulfilled (Col. 4:17; II Tim. 4:5).

16. Serving involves impartiality (Mk. 9:33-37).

17. Serving is to be performed:
    a) despite hardships (v. 4-5)
    b) with spiritual integrity (v. 6-7);
    c) despite belittlement, depreciation, misrepresentation or opposition by those who seek to discredit one's service (v. 8-9); and
    d) despite present personal privation (v. 10) (II Cor. 6:3-10).

18. Serving is to be rendered faithfully (ex. Tychicus - Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21; and Epaphras - Col. 1:7).

Appendix

I Timothy 3:11 – "Women" or "Wives"

The Greek word "gunaikas" may be translated with either "women" or "wives."

I. "Women" (in which case v. 11 would be parenthetical).

Major proofs the the word should be interpreted as "women":

1. Same grammatical structure as v. 8 - "in like manner, grave" 5) (both v. 8 and v. 11 are dependent on the word "must" of v. 2).

2. No relative pronoun "their" or article mentioned that could suggest relationship to deacon.

3. Pastor's wives are not qualified; why would deacon's wives be?

4. There were deaconesses in first century church (Rom. 16: 1)

5. The only way Paul could refer to women in verse 11 would be to use the Greek word gunaikas, because there is no feminine form of diakonos .

II. "Wives" is most likely the word choice because:

1. No modifying adjective "serving women" or "woman servants" is given.

2. Verse 11 is in the midst of context explicitly describing the qualifications of male deacons (v. 8-10, 11, 12-13) .

3. "gunaikas" - used in v. 12 as "wife."

4. No clear reference in New Testament of a woman holding an office of deacon (official position). Only one reference is made of a woman (Rom. 16:1 - Phoebe - generic servant).
   NOTE: the word diakonos is used of:
   1) domestic servants (Jn. 2:5, 9);
   2) civil ruler (Rom. 13:4);
   3) Christ (Rom. 15:8 ; Gal. 2:17);
   4) followers of Christ (Jn. 12:26).

5. More detail would be expected if this was a new, distinct office.

6. The word "in like manner" (hosautows) refers back to the qualities of the woman's husband

Deacons (v.8)	Deacon's wives (v.11)
" grave"	" grave"
"not double tongued"	"not slanderers"
"not given to much wine"	"sober"
"not greedy…holding faith in a pure conscience (v.9) ... blameless" (v.10)	“faithful in all things"

The Deacon's Relationship to the Church

Introduction: In the New Testament the word "slave" – ("doulos" - ex. Rom. 1:1) is used primarily as a description of a Christian's complete subjection to the Lord. "Servant" ("diakonos"), however, primarily describes a Christian's attitude and action toward fellow believers in the context of an assembly or local church. The "deacon" is one who is a servant to the Lord and a servant with a stewardship to meet the external (temporal) needs of Christ's church.

Acts 6:1-7

I. Deacons are Chosen by the Congregation (V. 3 - "look ye out"; v. 5 - "they chose").

A. They are men chosen from among the assembly ("among you" - v. 3).

B. They are men chosen based on an examination of qualifications by the assembly ("look ye out. men of honest report ... ").

C. They are men chosen for delegated responsibility for the assembly ("whom we may appoint over this business)
NOTE: Because deacons are chosen (elected) by the congregation, they are accountable to (answerable to) the congregation.

II. Deacons are chosen to serve the mundane needs of the church (v. 1).

A. Their ministry alleviates disorder and disunity ("murmuring) (they promote peace, harmony, and fellowship by their service).

B. Their ministry fulfills areas of mundane neglect ("widows were neglected" (overlooked).).

C. Their ministry involves time-consuming details ("daily minis try") .

1. Deacons (servants) were not chosen until needs arose.

2. Deacons are needed as long as temporal concerns exist.

III. The Deacon is Not to Interfere with the Pastor's Responsibility.

A. The deacon has delegated supervision over all the church's temporalities (Spirit-filled service). He must stick to his "business" (v. 3).

B. The pastor has inherent oversight over all the church's spiritualities (Spirit-filled leadership). He must continue in his "ministry" (v. 4).

NOTE: All activity by deacons outside of the meeting of mundane, physical or temporal needs did not come by virtue of their office but by virtue of their personal character or spirituality (ex. Steven, Acts 7) or by means of another office they may have held (ex. Philip the evangelist, Acts 8, 21:8).

IV. The Deacon is to be Approved by the Pastor for Service (v. 6 - "whom they set before the apostles/pastors).

V. The Deacon is to be Identified with the Pastor in Service (v. 6 - "they laid their hands on them").

Both are serving Christ – yet with distinct functions.

I Timothy 3:8-13

I. The Deacon Must Know How his Office Differs from his Pastor's.

A. The distinction is made evident by the titles given.

1. "Bishop"= meaning overseer (v. 1)

2. “Deacon” = meaning servant (v.8)

B. The distinction is made evident by the qualifications given.

1. The bishop (pastor) must be "apt to teach" (v. 2), while the deacon must serve well (use the office of a "deacon well" - v. 13).

C. This distinction is made evident by the function of the office described.

1. The pastor is to rule the flock.
(I Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17; I Th. 5:12; Rom. 12:8)

a. By instruction, oversight, and protection (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-12; I Pet. 5:1-5).

2. The deacon is to serve the flock.
a. With dignity, sincerity, sobriety, and honesty.

(He is not a legislator but an executor.)

The Deacon

Part I: His Standards and Conduct

Introduction: The church at Jerusalem had a general ("common") fund (Acts 2:44-45) which was placed into the hands of "the twelve" apostles for oversight and distribution (Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2). All church members with need were dependent on the apostles for their necessary sustenance (Acts 4:35), and for a while the apostles persevered in this performance. However, "when the number of the disciples was multiplied," God allowed difficulties to arise that He might initiate a new office--namely, the office of "deacon" (servant). Scripture is relatively brief in describing the specifics of what deacons are to do, but God speaks much about their qualifications. This fact alone is instructive about God's view of servants in the church. He is interested first and foremost in what a man is rather than in what he does. When a man is what God wants him to be internally, then what he does externally will naturally fall in line with God's revealed will--the Scripture. A servant who is truly qualified as God requires will inevitably function as God desires.

I. The Deacon's Status (His Relationship with the Assembly) (6:3a)

A. The deacon must be a man ("seven men . . .")

B. The deacon must be a saved man ("brethren. . . among you")

C. The deacon must be a church member ("among you" - lit. "out of yourselves")

II. The Deacon's Testimony (His Report (Witness) as Observed by the Assembly)

(NOTE: Men were not elected as deacons in order to possess a Godly testimony by having the Office, but rather they were chosen because they already had a continual, observable, Godly testimony.)

A. The deacon must evidence the control of the Holy Spirit (internal source of spirituality) ("full of the Holy Ghost" - v. 3b).

1. "Full" (see Acts 6: 8; 11: 24) - This word refers to the quality, not quantity, of the Spirit's ministry. "Filling" reveals a complete yieldedness to an influence with the result of a complete control by that influence (see Eph. 5:18).

2. "Holy Spirit" - His residence and control is evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

B. The deacon must evidence a skillful manner of living (external result of the Spirit's control).

1. "Wisdom" - (v. 3) is an external exemplification of Biblical knowledge (knowledge lived not merely known - see v. 10; Ja. 1:5, 3:13-17).

2. "Full of faith" - (v. 5) A man who confidently (boldly) trusts God's Word (Heb. 11).

III. The Deacon's Attitude (Toward His Responsibility to the Assembly) .

A. He must have a submissive attitude (a servant is one who can take orders--"whom we may appoint over . . . v.3c).

B. He must have a humble attitude (a servant is one who is willing to perform the common, everyday, mundane but necessary--tasks - "this business" - lit. "need, lack" - v.3 c).

1. “Daily ministration” (v.1).

a. The word "daily" reveals service to be routine, ordinary and temporal.

b. The word "ministration" is the word "diakonia" which means service or ministry (just as the title "deacon" (servant) necessitates humility)

(NOTE: This physical "ministry" is also a spiritual one, yet it is a distinct spiritual ministry from that of the apostle (pastor) who must give himself to the "ministry of the word" --v. 4).)

2. "Serve tables" - (v. 2) is indicative of a humble distribution of money to meet material needs.

C. He must have a responsible attitude (a servant is one who knows his own duty and sticks to it: NOTE: His responsibility is one of service not leadership--"He minds his own business") .

1. He must be willing to have accountability (He is responsible to the church who elected him - "the whole multitude, and they chose" - v. 5).

2. He must be willing to be identified with the Lord's work ("they laid their hands on them" - v. 6).

I Timothy 3:8-13

(The word "likewise" in verse eight indicates that the man who holds the office of a deacon must be qualified to do so, just as the pastor must be (v. 1-7). Because he is called "deacon," he must have a servant's heart.)

I. Deacons must be personally qualified (v. 8-10).

A. He must be a man of serious character (v. 8) - "grave."

1. Positively - to be "grave" (serious) is to be venerable, honorable and reputable. It means to have dignity. It describes one who is worthy of respect, because he has a seriousness of mind and character. He does not treat serious things lightly.

2. Negatively - to be "grave" (serious) is not to be:

a. A double talker ("not double tongued").

1) Not saying one thing to one man and a different thing to the next.

2) Not saying one thing while meaning another.

3) Not hypocritical but sincere.

4) Not untrustworthy but one who can keep confidences.

b. A man controlled by selfish appetites ("not given to much wine") (he is sober in practice, occupation) .

1) Generally, not abusive or excessive in fulfilling appetites.

2) Specifically, not one addicted to alcoholic beverages (wine (oinos) was the common beverage in Paul's day because the water was generally unfit for consumption. The same word referred to unfermented (watered down) grape juice ("new wine") and fermented drink).

c. A man controlled by selfish ambitions ("not greedy of filthy lucre" - he is sober in pursuits)

1) Not shamefully materialistic (cp. I Tim. 6:9-10).

2) This verse implies that the office might make available to the holder the opportunity to yield to this impulse.

B. He must be a man of spiritual character (v. 9-10).

1. Spiritual conviction (v. 9).
(He must be so convicted about his beliefs that his faith is matched in his practice, resulting in a clear conscience)

a. Purity in doctrine – "holding the mystery…"

b. Purity in practice - "in a pure conscience." (He is to live in light of the truth in such way that his enlightened conscience will have no cause to condemn)

2. Spiritual testimony (v. 10)

a. Before one is nominated to become an official deacon, he must first be approved after testing, observance, and examination of his character.

1) Not a new convert or new church member (if transferred).

b. Before lone becomes an official deacon he must first be found "blameless."

1) Without charge, accusation; unimpeachable; irreproachable.

II. Deacons must be <u>Domestically</u> Qualified (v. 11-13).

(A man's domestic relations are the true evidence of Christian character. No place is more indicative of a man's real character than his home, and no one is a better reflection of his character than his wife and children!)

NOTE: These verses are <u>not</u> commanding or necessitating that a man be married or have children in order to be a deacon; but are presupposing that the case is so, because typically it is.

A. He is qualified by his <u>wife's character</u> (v. 11).

1. His wife must be <u>serious</u> ("grave") - same word used for her husband in verse eight.

2. His wife must <u>not</u> be a "<u>slanderer</u>." (This adjective is used substantively as a name for the devil--she must not be a "she devil" with improper speech).

3. His wife must be "<u>sober</u>." (abstinence from wine. cp. v. 2).

4. His wife must be "<u>faithful</u>" ("in all things" = to Christ, her church, her husband, and her children. This is accomplished by being faithful to <u>God's Word</u>).

The words "even so" (likewise) refer back to her husband's qualifications. Note comparison and similarity:

<u>Deacons (v.8)</u>	<u>Deacon's wives (v.11)</u>
" grave"	" grave"
"not double tongued"	"not slanderers"
"not given to much wine"	"sober"
"not greedy…holding faith in a pure conscience (v.9) ... blameless" (v.10)	"faithful in all things"

B. He is qualified by his own <u>moral character</u> (v.12).

1. He must be a man of <u>marital</u> faithfulness ("a one-woman man") .

a. Marital status – not a divorced man.

b. Moral character - a man whose affection and devotion are only to one woman, his wife.

2. He must be a man of managerial faithfulness ("ruling . . . well")

("Ruling" = to manage, direct, lead, or head up.)

a. Continual faithfulness in managing children.

b. Continual faithfulness in managing household (all under headship).

C. He is qualified (as a deacon) by his faithful service (v. 13)

("Deacon well" = to serve favorably: 1) before God and 2) the ones served, i.e. the assembly)

1. He will gain a respected reputation.

a. "A good degree" - a good standing in the esteem of the church.

2. He will gain a respected influence.

a. "Great boldness" - Those who gain a good reputation are also those who will be able to speak boldly (confidently) about their faith in Jesus Christ (cp. Acts 7, 8).

Conclusion: The qualities listed in Acts 6:1-7 and I Timothy 3:8-13 are those that every believer should have, and qualities that every potential deacon must have to hold this noble office.