

THE ORDER OF DEACONS

Because of the importance that it plays in the future success of our reformation and local assemblies, many issues of the sort of leadership and officerships in the body of Christ go unattended or unaddressed. In many cases, these issues are left to the personal discretion of the pastor with little outside guidance. Nevertheless, because of the seriousness of this matter and knowing that, many of our pastors are but in the early years of their ministry, I felt pressed as your primate to offer counsel.

Within the body of Christ, in view of the scriptures, there are only two offices in the church: one the office of the Presbyter known to us as Elder or bishop, and second the Diakonate or deacon. I wish to speak to you concerning the latter, the Deacon.

The Diakonate

Acts 6:1-4 KJV

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. [2] Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. [3] Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. [4] But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

One thing we have to see about scripture is this; the Bible is very clear in showing us that **the Apostles were very organized**. However, the Bible does not go into explaining the methods they use. I feel that this is in the plan of God, knowing that many in the church would read the Bible, get the method, and forget the need for being spiritual.

Among the duties of the Deacon, they were to see after **all** the widows. Because the method was not recorded, we miss the meat of this verse. Remember women outnumber men 10 to 1. There were 10's of thousands of Christians with three thousand being added just on the day of Pentecost. There would have been thousands of widows for just 7 men to see after.

Acts 6:5-6 KJV

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of

Antioch: [6] Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

The verse says that it was the Apostles that called the men to the office of the Diaconate. It was also the Apostles that laid hands on them and imparted to them, thus *multiplying themselves* in the church. This is apparent in the next verse that says,

Acts 6:7 KJV

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

In the present church, we know that the *Bishops are the descendants of the apostles*. Thus, in our reformation the Deacons in the local assemblies, are actually the possessions (*meant in the most honorable way*) of the presiding prelate on loan to the local assemblies.

The Deacon

I feel that if we desire to operate in the church in the way that God has planned we have to take the authority of scripture over the teaching that we may have received from those that claim to be authorities.

As it relates to the office of a deacon, ***their only duty is that of serving***. It is only in this era of the church that the office of the deacon became one that carries any kind of authority. God never intended for the deacon to have any kind of authority within the body of Christ. The sole purpose for this office was that of serving. *I feel that this has to be made very clear to each candidate that is even to be considered for this office.*

The word “deacon” in the Greek is the same as the word that we translate “minister”. Though this does also suggest the ministering of the Word of God, the main intent is that of serving or to managing affairs.

Watchmen Nee explains that in the Anglican Church the office of the deacon is called a “ministry”, whereas in the Wesleyan church the office would be referred to as a “service”. Either title that you chose to use is ok, the meaning is still very clear; the job of a deacon is that of a servant.

Who can be a Deacon?

It goes without saying that everyone in the church is called to serve. However, when we come to the time of choosing those brothers and sisters that will be called to the office of Deacons or deaconesses *you can only choose the ones that have proven to be stable and responsible. This is a must!* All may serve, but only

those that carry spiritual weight; which comes as a result of their trustworthiness, can be elevated to the office of the Diakonate. The main reason that it is necessary, as expressed by Watchmen Nee, is so that there will not be an inconsistency in the office with *constant changing of deacons*.

Another very important fact in the process of choosing people for the office of the Diakonate is for us to make sure that we do not choose people simply on the proof of their ability to perform a good job. We can never justify ordaining deacons that are long on ability, but short on spiritual depth.

I feel that within the church there is a dangerous temptation for pastors to choose people that are good workers. No matter how capable a person is to do a job in the church, if that person has no spiritual depth we will find the work and our churches becoming more and more injected and infused with worldly wisdom. It is only a person that is full of the Holy Ghost that can work in the church and allow the Grace of God to be manifest even in the mundane affairs given to them.

Not only do those that are to be ordained as deacons have to know what to do, *they have to know the ways of God*. Many of the problems that are prevalent in the church today are a result of a poor selection process as it relates to the Diakonate and other leadership positions.

If we are to keep the church from being converted into just another social club, we have to choose not only those that have the outward marks of being successful, but they must also whole the inward revelation of the ways of God.

Let us at all times remember that we have to uphold a spiritual standard. We cannot neglect obvious talents that may be seen in people, but yet we cannot be obsessed with it to the point of disregarding the need for them to meet the spiritual criteria of the office. Watchman Nee warns us not to be careless in this area, for to do so is to invite the world's maneuvers into the church. This would not only create a great problem, but it would be one that would be very difficult to solve.

I would close with emphasizing only two of the clear instructions that the Bible gives on the qualifications for the office of the deacon.

- 1. The deacon has to be one that not only is able to serve but will do so diligently.**
- 2. The Deacon must be one that has spiritual understanding.**