

# The First Deacons

Acts 6:1-7

David Feddes

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

<sup>2</sup> So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. <sup>3</sup> Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them <sup>4</sup> and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

<sup>5</sup> This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. <sup>6</sup> They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

# Sharing as needed

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

- Collect donations of money
- Store or “bank” money until needed
- Buy and give food to meet needs

# Problems

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

- Lying givers (Ananias/Sapphira)
- Griping recipients (Grecian Jews)
- Overworked apostles

# Overworked

Moses father-in-law said, “What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone... Select capable men ... who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain...” (Exodus 18:17-21)



# Sharing the load

“Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.” (Exodus 18:22-23)

# Staying focused

“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables... We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” (Acts 7:2-4)

# Choosing leaders

“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.” (Acts 6:3)

- Multiple leaders, not just one
- Choice involves congregation
- Spiritual, wise, well qualified

# Chosen & ordained

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:5-6)

# **Problem produces fresh opportunities**

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

# Deacon duties

- Model and teach service to others
- Mobilize believers' stewardship
- Manage church's money
- Meet physical and financial needs
- Team up with pastors and elders to lead and mobilize believers' abilities
- Pursue godliness and witness

# Deacon plus

Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people... [Opponents] could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. (Acts 6:8-10)

# Deacon plus

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:5-6)



# Deacon plus

Philip ran up to the chariot... he told him the good news about Jesus... Philip baptized him... Philip traveled about, preaching the gospel. (Acts 8:30-40)

We stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. (Acts 21:8-9)

# Great in serving

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [διάκονος], and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:43-45)

“I am among you as one who serves [ὁ διακονῶν].” (Luke 22:28)

# Qualified

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. (1 Timothy 3:8-10)

# Qualified

In the same way, their wives [γυναίκας] are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim 3:11-13)

# God's household

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15)

# Advent mystery

Beyond all question, the mystery of  
godliness is great:

He appeared in a body,  
was vindicated by the Spirit,  
was seen by angels,  
was preached among the nations,  
was believed on in the world,  
was taken up in glory. (1 Tim 3:16)