

A Biblical Theology of Deacons

Building a biblical worldview

MEFC Sep 12, 2021

(1) Pre-understandings about Deacons

(2) Explicit Bible texts

- *diakonos* [noun 29x], *diakoneō* [verb 37x], *diakonia* [noun 34x]

(3) Implicit Bible texts

Similar theological word families: douleuō, hupēreteō, oiketeia, therapeuō, latreuō, leitourgeō

What does the Bible say about leadership and governance in other spheres?

What does the Bible say about church governance?

- Local churches are *autonomous* and yet *interdependent*
- Local churches are organized around officers and member-saints

Offices under different eras or Covenants?

Adamic: _____

Mosaic Covenant/Law: _____

New Covenant (_____)

1. _____ (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 12:28)
2. _____ (1 Cor 12:28; 1 Cor 14)
3. _____ (Acts 21:8; 8:26-40)
4. _____ (1 Cor 12:28; 1 Tim 3:1-7)
5. _____ (1 Tim 3; Php 1:1)

What does the Bible say about Elders - Overseers/Bishops - Pastor/Teachers?

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

(4) Church History

What have deacons done over the ages?

Early Church

- Benevolence/charity/compassion/mercy
- Liturgical functions (e.g. Lord’s Supper; collection/giving)

Middle Ages

- Hierarchical church structure (episcopalianism) developed
- The Diaconate became a step towards priesthood

Reformation

- Deacons were restored as a more biblical office; often ministers of mercy

Reformation to Modern Era

1. Anglican tradition:
2. Reformed/Presbyterian:
3. Baptist/Congregational:
 - until 1900:
 - 20th century:
 - late 20th-now:

How should a church be governed?

(1) Episcopalian

- Offices: Bishops, Presbyter/Rector/Priest, Deacons

(2) Presbyterian

- Offices: Elder (ruling & teaching), Deacon

(3) Congregational

- Offices: Elder, Deacon; other “boards” or “committees”
- Various forms:
 1. Single Pastor/Elder & Deacons
 2. Plural Elders & Deacons
 3. Church board, over Pastor(s), over Congregation

Are Deacons male and/or female?

1. Male *Deacons* (with their female wives)
2. Male & Female *Deacons*
3. Male *Deacons* & Female *Deaconesses*
4. Male *Deacons* & Female *Assistants* to the deacons

(5) THE GOSPEL

Matt 20:20-28 “...But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. **But whoever would be great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave (*doulos*), 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served (*diakoneō*) but to serve (*diakoneō*), and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

Elders and Deacons

- Elders do not *rule or lead* as the Gentiles
- Deacons do not *serve for personal gain*

Every Christian

- Every Christian “deacons”, serving others for their good

1 Peter 4:10-11: As each has received a gift, **use it to serve** (*diakoneō*) one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever **serves** (*diakoneō*), as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of **service** (*diakonia*), but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”