

DEACONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi,
with the overseers and **deacons**:

- ☞ Deacons are not the same as Overseers in title or purpose. Both are distinct groups with differing (albeit similar) qualifications. Both Deacons and Overseers are appointed groups within the larger body of saints.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES CONCERNING SERVICE & SERVANTS

Matthew 20:25–28 (ESV)

²⁵ 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**, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to **be served** but **to serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- ☞ A servant becomes great through service.
- ☞ A servant is like Jesus who served.

John 12:26 (ESV)

²⁶ If anyone **serves** me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my **servant** be also. If anyone **serves** me, the Father will honor him.

- ☞ A servant follows Jesus and serves Jesus.

Romans 16:1–2 (ESV)

16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **servant** of the church at Cenchreae, ² that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

- ☞ The Scriptures reveal women as servants too, even in the church.

Matthew 27:55–56 (ESV)

⁵⁵ There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, **ministering** to him, ⁵⁶ among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

- ☞ Whether or not a woman can or should serve as a deacon is a debated and divisive issue. **This packet assumes deacons are men.* What is not debated or divisive is that women have an important place of service, even in the church! *Service* is not for men only, but for all.

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Acts 6:1–7 (ESV)

6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily **distribution**.² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God **to serve** tables.

³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the **ministry** of the word.” ⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

- ☞ An increase in *disciples* created a strain on *priorities*.
 - ...*Priorities* were strained due to lack of *capacity* (of the twelve).
 - ...Lack of *capacity* (of the twelve) led to *neglect*.
 - ...*Neglect* gave rise to a *complaint*.
 - ...A *complaint* required a *solution*.
 - ...A *solution* called for *service*.
 - ...*Service* is performed by *servants*.
 - ...**...Servants were chosen.**
 - ...*Chosen* servants would be appointed for this *service*.
 - ...This *service* would be a *solution*.
 - ...This *solution* would answer the *complaint*.
 - ...The *complaint* would be silenced by *addressing neglect*.
 - ...*Addressing neglect* restored *capacity* (of the twelve).
 - ...*Restored capacity* (of the twelve) fueled *right priorities*.
- [v.1-7]

- ☞ A Deacon is not a complainer but a *solution* to a complaint through *service* (meeting a need).
- ☞ Deacons are an essential component of *multiplying disciples*. Without a plan for meeting needs through increased growth a church will not be prepared for more disciples.
- ☞ Deacons share the workload of service ministry enabling others to focus on the ministry of the word and prayer so that none are neglected.
- ☞ These Deacons performed work that the twelve did first. In this way, the Deacons are an extension of the twelve in appointed tasks.
- ☞ These Deacons were chosen by the disciples and appointed (put in charge) of a specific work by the twelve. **The Deacons did not appoint themselves to a work or function independently of the twelve, but under the twelve’s oversight and authority.**
- ☞ At the instruction of the twelve, the disciples picked men from among them who were
 - 1.) “of good repute” (well spoken of, a good testimony)
 - 2.) “full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Spirit-led and wise) and “faith.” [v.3 & v.5]
- ☞ The twelve prayed and laid hands on those that were chosen.
- ☞ **The result of this solution was that the word of God continued to increase, the number of disciples multiplied, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.**
(v.7)