

Seven Deacons

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Acts / Deacons; Apostle; An Elder; Pastor; Body of Christ; Church Order; Organization Founder / Acts 6:1-7

As the new church was growing rapidly they saw the need to organize. They needed more leaders to manage the growing needs of the early church. Satan was not happy and wanted to destroy the church with quarreling and in-fighting. God put an end to it, through the ministry of deacons.

ORGANIZATION

In his book Harvest of Humanity, John Seamands told this story: "A German soldier was wounded. He was ordered to go to the military hospital for treatment. When he arrived at the large and imposing building, he saw two doors, one marked, 'For the slightly wounded,' and the other, 'For the seriously wounded.'"

"He entered through the first door and found himself going down a long hall. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, 'For officers', and the other, 'For non-officers.' He entered through the latter and found himself going down another long hall. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, 'For party members' and the other, 'For non-party members.' He took the second door, and when he opened it he found himself out on the street."

"When the soldier returned home, his mother asked him, 'How did you get along at the hospital?' 'Well, Mother,' he replied, 'to tell the truth, the people there didn't do anything for me, but you ought to see the tremendous organization they have!'"

Daily Bread.

Growing

[Acts 6:1](#) (ESV)

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number...

- Church growing rapidly.
 - requiring structure
 - requiring order
 - requiring organization
 - requiring more volunteers
- Too many people
 - for 12 to manage.
 - thousands
 - commune
 - money
 - food
 - care

Complaint

Acts 6:1 *ESV*

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.

- Complaint
 - firstly,
 - not just about food.
 - cultural issue
 - racial issue.
- Modern US
 - not first time
 - racial issues
 - in the church!
- Satan afraid,
 - church growing rapidly.
 - great success

- people converting
- influential leaders
- Satan know how
 - divide and destroy
 - racial issues.
- Bible is not clear
 - a complaint
 - true?
 - false?
- Maybe true in
 - some minds...
- The early church experience
 - such unity
 - threatened to destroy.

- Apostles agreed
 - addressed immediately.

Delegation

Acts 6:2 *ESV*

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.

- Know the problem is urgent.
 - but have greater priorities.
 - delegate others.
- Powerful points...
- Names Priority of Apostles.
- First How does this
 - compare to our structure?

New Testament Church Organization

- Apostle means
 - - Person who is sent.

[Luke 6:13-16](#) (ESV)

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, **whom he named apostles**: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

- Original 12 Disciples
 - are called
 - the 12 apostles.

[1 Corinthians 1:1](#) (ESV)

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus...

- Paul claim God gave him

- spiritual authority
 - of apostleship.
- Later in the NT.
 - leaders are called
 - by other names.

Titus 1:5 ESV

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

- Paul said,
 - appoint/ordain elders
- Reading Further,
 - uses term interchangeably.

Titus 1:5–7 NKJV

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of

God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

- Elder = Bishop
 - Other versions say
 - “overseer”
- We like to use
 - the word pastor.
- That name only used
 - once in NT.

Ephesians 4:11 ESV

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

- Pastor means
 - shepherd
 - (shepherd of flock).

- Apostles
 - people alive with Christ.
 - no longer exist.

- All of us are
 - his disciples...

- Elders, Bishops, Overseers, and Pastors
 - synonymous terms
 - biblically speaking.

- There was hierarchy
 - among them.

- Paul was apostle,
 - Taught Timothy.
 - He appointed elders
 - in each town.

- In our church,
 - Pastor - Paid
 - Elders - Volunteer

- Probably similar
 - to Timothy and local elders

- Timothy had a circuit
 - of churches to manage
 - local elder did
 - day to day stuff.

- Local elders
 - likely had jobs.

- Timothy
 - likely full-time ministry.

- Early SDA Church

- set up same way.
- First district
 - 4 churches
 - 3 churches
 - 1 church
- In this role
 - Timothy is “pastor”
- Pastor is really
 - visionary
 - church planter
 - elders keep things going.

Lessons on Church Organization

- Church became more
 - organized with time.

- Organization came
 - as needed
- Deacon appointed
 - as need arose!
 - Not directed in advance.
- Apostles in first century
 - = pastors (elders/bishops)
 - of today

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't.

"What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus.

"These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold."

"Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

- Role of
 - Apostles, Pastor, Elder

[Acts 6:2-4](#) (NKJV)

Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren,

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seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Role of Pastor

- (Timothy’s Job)
 - Visionary
 - Church Planter
 - Oversee/ appoint leaders

Role of Pastor/ Elders

- Focus on Word
- Prayer
- Ministry of Word

1 Peter 5:1-2 NKJV

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

Shepherd Flock

2 Timothy 4:1-2 NKJV

I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

Preach the Word

1 Timothy 4:13 ESV

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

- Exhortation
 - Encouragement
- Admonition
 - Rebuke

Titus 1:9 ESV

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- Rebuke and defend.

Defend Against Heresy

Acts 20:17 NKJV

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

- Meeting with Elders
 - Charges them:

[Acts 20:28-31](#) (NKJV)

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this,

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that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Historians have related the heartwarming story of Abdul Kassem Ismael, the scholarly grand-vizier of Persia in the tenth century, and his library of 117,000 volumes. On his many travels as a warrior and statesman, he never parted with his beloved books. There were carried about by 400 camels trained to walk in alphabetical order. His camel-driver librarians could put their hands instantly on any book their master asked for.

Role of Deacons

Acts 6:2–4 ESV

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.

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. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

- Original Purpose
 - ministry to
 - elderly
 - shut in
 - hungry
 - physical needs
 - basic spiritual needs
- Many churches
 - Deacon do
 - offering
 - church maintenance.

1. Assistance at Services and Meetings

- Greeter
- Ushers
- Offering

2. Visitation of Members

- Districts
- Each home each quarter

3. Preparation for Baptismal Services

4. Assistance at Communion Service

5. Care of the Sick and Aiding the Poor and Unfortunate

6. Care and Maintenance of Property

- If no cleaner
- If no building committee

There are four main bones in every organization.

The wish-bones: Wishing somebody would do something about the problem.

The jaw-bones: Doing all the talking but very little else.

The knuckle-bones: Those who knock everything.

The back-bones: Those who carry the brunt of the load and do most of the work.

Elders vs. Deacons

- Elders:

- Spiritual Leadership
 - Spiritual Authority
 - Teaching Preaching
 - Exhortation
 - Rebuke
-
- Deacons:
 - Helping Ministry
 - Personal Ministry
 - Hands On
 - Not as Theological
 - Not required to teach

Teaching of Seven Deacons

- Stephen
 - killed for teaching
- Philip
 - Teaching in Samaria

Female Deacons

Romans 16:1 ESV

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae,

- Word Servant
 - actually deacon.
- Now we have
 - deaconesses.

In football they have a huddle, the goal of which is to give thirty seconds to call the play. The players need to get *organized* so they can know where to go and what to do. A huddle is a necessary part of playing the game, but what happens on the field after is what really counts. This is sort of like Sunday morning church services. People don't seem to understand that the huddle is so we can play the game. The effectiveness of your church cannot be measured by how well you do on Sunday morning. The test of the church is what it does to share Christ during the week. (*Source Unknown*).

Ordination of Deacons

Acts 6:5–6 ESV

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. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

- Ordination
 - lay hands
 - pray

Key Principles

- Different Needs in Body
 - We can all serve
 - God needs you.

[1 Corinthians 12:4–11](#) (ESV)

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God

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who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the

utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith

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by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another

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the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

- Everyone is gifted
 - everyone serves.
 - please find a spot.
- What was result
 - unity in service?

Acts 6:7 ESV

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.

- When we work together.

- Gospel reaches
 - more people.
- That's what it's about!

Appeal

I'm only one,

but I am one.

I can't do everything,

but I can do something.

What I can do,

I ought to do.

And what I ought to do,

by the grace of God

I will do.

- Thanks for serving.
- Keep Serving.

- Organization needs you.
- Serve with a heart for God.