

THE FIRST DEACONS

Acts 6:1-7

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Christians are familiar with "deacons" as every Church seems to have "deacons." The responsibilities of deacons varies from Church to Church, so where and when did "deacons" get started? The Church at Jerusalem had grown from just a few to several thousand members and it was full of love and care, having all things in common. Some sold property and gave the money to the Church and there were many who just didn't have very much, if anything as well as there being widows and such that needed help. It seemed that a disagreement arose over some not being able to get help and that others were receiving special attention. Therefore someone was needed to take care of those matters as the pastors were very busy in so many areas that they just couldn't do everything. Thus "deacons" were initiated.

I. THE CHURCH CONTINUED TO GROW IN SPITE OF MUCH PERSECUTION

1. By the grace of God, the Church continued to grow like Israel did in Egypt when under much affliction and the more affliction, the more growth.
2. Nothing will hinder the work of God, the cause of Christ and the success of the Gospel.
3. The Church started with about 120 members and grew to several thousand in just a very short time.

II. WITH ALL THE CHURCH SUDDEN GROWTH, DISCORD AROSE WITHIN THE MEMBERSHIP

1. Everybody had been of one accord, of one heart, mind and purpose, witnessing and caring for one another until all the sudden growth.
 - With so much growth, the Church began to change.
 - The Church increased in numbers, but not in joy and fellowship.
2. There arose complaints created by selfishness and pride and self-pity.

III. THERE AROSE A COMPLAINT ABOUT HOW MONEY WAS BEING SPENT

1. Satan is very good at finding things to create discord within God's Church and he started in the Church of Jerusalem with greed.
 - Christians are supposed to be more concerned over things of the world to come, not get all wrapped up in temporary and earthly matters.
 - **"...The love of money is the root of all evil..." (1 Timothy 6:10)**
 - It blinds one's eye and perverts judgment.
2. Disagreement over money creates disharmony between a husband and wife and sadly, most Church disagreements and even Church splits are over money.

IV. THERE NEVER HAS BEEN OR EVER WILL BE A PERFECT CHURCH ON THIS EARTH

1. Every congregation will sooner or later have problems within to deal with.
 - Never leave a Church just because a problem arises.
 - Work together to overcome problems.
 - No family should ever break up because there is a disagreement.
2. Petty differences should never break up a Church family for the Church family should yield to one another and serve one another.

V. THE OFFICE OF DEACON WAS ESTABLISHED TO SOLVE THE CHURCH PROBLEM

1. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the office of deacon was started.
 - The first seven deacons were chosen to meet a specific need in the Church.
 - Why seven? Because seven were needed at that time.
 - Some Churches today need less, some need more.
2. Why was the office of deacon established?
 - God wanted to give pastors relief from all the secular, worldly concerns so they might give themselves entirely to the ministry of the Word.
 - No person can give himself to more than one major assignment.
 - Churches have deacons whose responsibility it is to see that their pastors have no need to concern themselves with non theological matters.
 - Deacons must take care to see that the material needs of the pastor and his family are met.
 - Deacons are to take care of the Church property and Church members are cared for properly.
 - Deacons are to see to the distribution of Church funds for the ministry of the Word and the care of their needy.
 - Deacons are servants:
 - They serve tables, the Lord's Table, the pastor's table and the table of all of God's Children.
3. How were the first deacons chosen?
 - The Church at Jerusalem had several congregations scattered throughout the area.
 - The Apostles called together the pastors from these congregations and instructed them to chose from among the membership seven men (no women) of good report.
 - The seven were chosen in accord with the instructions given by the Apostles.
 - They were chosen from the membership of the Church.
 - They were permanently ordained in as deacons, not "installed" or for a short time.
4. What kind of men were the deacons to be?
 - God's Word clearly describes the character of those who may be properly ordained to the office of deacon.
 - They are not to be chosen upon the basis of friendship, but of faithfulness.
 - Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-12
 - No man should ever be placed as a deacon who does not meet the qualifications given in God's Word.
5. What is the work that deacons are to do?
 - "Deacon" means "servant."
 - A deacon is a man who serves the Lord's Church, the interests of the Gospel, and the pastor who proclaims the Gospel (his pastor).
 - The first seven deacons were chosen to relieve the Apostles of the burden of caring for the poor.
 - It is the work of deacons to do whatever they can to relieve their pastor of any burden or care tghat would in any way distract him from preaching the Gospel.
6. What effect did the service of these seven deacons have upon the Church?
 - Because the deacons went about their work quietly and faithfully, the Word of God increased and many more were saved.
 - The Gospel was then preached where it had not been preached before had these seven men not relieved the Apostles.
 - The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ grew.
 - Faithful deacons are an asset to any Church congregation and an asset to the pastor's work.
 - Pastors and deacons, with the Church membership work together in the cause of the Lord Jesus.
 - Deacons who work faithfully as deacons earn the respect of their pastor and of their Church family.

7. The Apostles did not invent an office in the Church family in a hurry.
 - The Apostles acted under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - It was an act inspired of God
 - No Church has the authority to "invent" offices in the Church and appoint people to fill them.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Church was started by the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Pastors are God's appointed Spiritual leaders of the Church.
3. Deacons were started by God.
3. Deacons are men selected by their Church to be "servants" within the Church family helping relieve the pastor of non spiritual, theological matters therefore giving the pastor more time to tend to the spiritual matters of the Church Family.
4. Deacons ARE SERVANTS of their Church, NOT the head, not the authority figures, but servants under authority of God, their pastor and their Church family.