

Deacon Handbook



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction, Biblical & Historical Background..... | page 3 |
| Qualifications/Practical Duties of a Deacon..... | page 4 |
| The Relationships of a Deacon..... | page 5 |
| The Deacon's Service..... | ...page 6 |
| The Nomination and Ordination of Deacons..... | page 7 |
| Deacon Body Organization & Structure..... | page 8 |
| Using Spiritual Gifts as Deacons..... | page 9 |
| Prayer and Fasting Resources for Deacons..... | page 11 |
| The Deacons Humility..... | page 15 |

INTRODUCTION

This manual is dedicated to helping you as a deacon to serve faithfully and effectively. It is designed to acquaint you with the biblical materials related to the office of deacon and the particulars of the deacon ministry of Redeemer Church.

Redeemer Church nominated you for the position of deacon, because your life has exhibited the characteristics of faithfulness and loyalty both to the Lord and His church. A deacon must remember, however, that Jesus said, "The greatest among you will be your servant." (Mt 23:11)

Three passages in the New Testament are commonly cited concerning the office of deacon: Acts 6:1-7, Philippians 1:1, and I Timothy 3:8-12. The word for deacon in the New Testament originally means "one who serves". As a deacon, your major attention will be given to serving God under the leadership of the elders in the practical ministry of the church.

THE BIBLICAL / HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF A DEACON

Acts 6:1-7 is the passage often cited for the beginning of the office of deacon in the early Christian church. Though the seven who were elected were not specifically called "deacons" in the technical sense, they nonetheless functioned as deacons. The office of deacon probably grew out of this experience.

Without belaboring all of the details of the Acts 6 passage, let's look at the purpose for which these men were selected. One reason they were chosen was to solve a problem that arose among the church fellowship. They were called upon to preserve the harmony of the church.

Another reason was to free the apostles to give full attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word (v. 4).

The position of deacon in Acts 6 is an elected one. A deacon should certainly feel led to serve in that position; however the initiation of that commitment rests in the hands of the local church. It is not a position to which one appoints oneself.

We believe that the office of deacon was also held by women, with Phoebe being an example (Romans 16:1). We do not believe this in any way conflicts with the biblical view of complementarianism that Redeemer Church holds to since the office of deacon is not an authoritative nor teaching position and has clear biblical precedence.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON

The **Biblical qualifications** for a deacon are found in Acts 6 and in I Timothy 3:8-13. They are divided into 3 categories:

1. SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS (ACTS 6:1-6)

- a) Men of good reputation
- b) Full of the Spirit
- c) Full of wisdom

2. MORAL QUALIFICATIONS (I TIMOTHY 3: 8-10, 12-13)

- a) Worthy of respect
- b) Not hypocritical
- c) Not drinking a lot of wine
- d) Not greedy for money
- e) Holding the mystery of faith with a clear conscience
- f) The husband of one wife
- g) Managing their children and their own households well

3. QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE WIFE OF A DEACON (I TIMOTHY 3:11)

- a) Worthy of respect
- b) Not slanderers
- c) Self-controlled
- d) Faithful in everything

PRACTICAL DUTIES OF A DEACON AT REDEEMER CHURCH

These are the practical responsibilities of the deacons within Redeemer Church (some aspects expanded upon *The Deacon's Service* section on page 6):

1. Support and respect of the elders and other staff of Redeemer.
2. Faithful attendance of Sunday morning services.
3. Encouragement of and participation in the life of the church –Community Groups, outreach, special events, etc. A deacon should be an example of what a member of Redeemer Church should look like.
4. A consistent commitment to stewardship by tithing to the church.
5. Personal evangelism among the lost
6. Visitation of the sick and homebound of the membership.
7. Leading of the Lord's Supper.
8. Keeping an attentive ear to the material needs of the congregation and coordinating with the other deacons on how best to help.
9. Attending Deacon Meetings as needed.

THE RELATIONSHIPS OF A DEACON

Certainly, the deacon's primary relationship is to his Lord. Without that vertical relationship, the horizontal relationships will be distorted. A deacon should be more concerned about his walk with God than anything. Next in importance is the deacon's knowledge and understanding of his role in relation to his family, pastor and the church membership at large.

A Deacon's Relationship to his Family

The New Testament mentions a deacon's responsibility in relation to his wife and children. Therefore, a deacon should give his family first priority in his devotion, care and ministry.

A Deacon's Relationship to the Elders

A deacon should serve under the leadership and spiritual direction of the elders and be loyal to his elders in prayer support, encouragement and fellowship. Redeemer Church looks to the elders for giving overall leadership and administration to the church and its ministry. The church, therefore, expects the deacons to respect the office of elder and to welcome the unique

opportunity to learn from and serve with the elders. As a deacon functions in the practical ministry of the church, he partners with the elders in ministering to the members of the church.

A Deacon's Relationship to the Church Membership at Large

The deacons are to be active in ministry to the church family, promoting peace, harmony and a spirit of cooperation among the membership. The primary relationship of the deacons to the church is as follows:

1. Deacons are to be problem solvers and preservers of church harmony.
2. Deacons should strive to be proactive in caring for the needs of the congregation, asking questions about their lives with genuine love and care.
3. Deacons should be able to speak to the spiritual concerns in the lives of the members of Redeemer Church with discernment, directing them to the elders when needed.

The Deacon's Service

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 10:45

Attendance

- Deacons are to model church attendance on a consistent basis. Worship participation, Community Group attendance, and special events all represent expected occasions where a deacon could and should attend. Obviously, 100% attendance at all possible services is unrealistic, but so is expecting our church and membership to grow without deacons leading the charge.

Deacon Meetings

- Deacon's meetings may be held at a variety of days and times. We leave it at the discretion of the deacon body with how often they need to meet. These meetings are held so the deacon body can strategize with how to best serve the church body and (if needed) bring any needs to the elders. They are a time of spiritual renewal through prayer and fellowship for the deacon body as well.

Visitation/Hospital Visits

- Visitation does not come naturally for every church member, including deacons. However, by doing home visitations, deacons are able to deepen the relationship with those who are homebound, those who have specific material needs at their home, and provide opportunities for prayer and encouragement for hurting members of Redeemer Church.

- Hospital visits are a meaningful way for deacons to serve church members. Those in the hospital can often feel alone, scared, or anxious. Thus, visiting members who are in the hospital provides comfort as well as the opportunity for the member to ask for help with material needs during their stay. We ask that the deacon be willing to make a hospital visit if called upon by the elders.

Organic Ministry of Service

- The primary way a deacon will come to care for the needs of a church member is simply by being a good listener. Whether on Sunday morning, at Community Group, or by just having someone over for dinner, simply hearing of the needs of the church body around you and lovingly asking how you can be of help is how you will most effectively serve as a deacon.
- When a need is heard, you may bring it to the attention of the other deacons as you work together to serve the member(s). *
- Redeemer Church desires to give freedom, with practical reason, for the deacon body to serve the needs of the member(s).
- A budget of \$1,000 per month is permitted for use to the deacon body for the needs of the congregation. Any unspent funds from the previous month do not roll over. If a need of a member exceeds the monthly budget of \$1,000, it may be presented to the elders for prayer and consideration.

** Be sure to use discernment. Some will come to you in confidence, so if you believe there may be an issue with you sharing their need, be sure to ask permission.*

Nomination and Ordination of Deacons

Each deacon of the Redeemer Church shall meet the scriptural qualifications from Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:8 – 13, support the ministries of the church, demonstrate mature faith, and be a member for at least one year.

Redeemer Church will seek to have a Deacon Body that shall consist up to four (4) members who will serve until God leads them elsewhere*.

Deacons shall be nominated and ordained** in the following manner:

- Deacons may be nominated for consideration by a member of Redeemer Church.
- Deacons may be nominated for consideration by an elder of Redeemer Church.

Upon receiving the nomination(s), the candidate(s) will be reviewed by the elders. Upon unanimous agreement from the elders and a confirmation of a willingness to serve, the candidate(s) will begin the deacon pathway at an agreed upon time.

- After completion of the deacon pathway, the candidate(s) will be reviewed once more by the elders along with personal meetings with each to determine continued wiliness, desire and qualification to serve.
- Ordination will be held the Sunday one month after the completion of the deacon pathway.
- The deacons will begin their duties immediately upon ordination.

**Deacons may voluntarily step down upon the leading of God to a new ministry, to better serve their family, for a temporary time of respite/ sabbatical or for a personal moral failing*

***By ordination, we specifically mean appointment. This is not to be confused with official ordination of a pastor/elder*

Deacon Body – Organization & Structure

The following is a summary of the organization of the Deacon Body and the duties of its leaders.

Deacon Body

The Deacon Body is the active, functional, organized body of deacons ordained and set aside by Redeemer Church to serve the congregation. The deacon body shall consist of up to four (4) active deacons who shall be nominated and ordained by the church according to the process described in this guidebook. However, the deacons have the responsibility to recommend to the church changes in the deacon membership as ministry requirements dictate (such as increasing the number of active deacons).

Deacon Leadership

1. Lead Deacon

Chosen by the Deacon Body, this person serves as the motivational and organizational leader of the deacon body. His duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plan, conduct and evaluate deacon meetings.
- Lead the deacons in becoming an effective ministry team and in developing their ministry plans.
- Work closely with the Pastor and Church Staff to facilitate an effective ministry partnership.
- Work with other deacons to identify the needs of the congregation and strategize how to solve them.

- We encourage the deacon leader to seek out and share with the deacon body resources for developing in the role of deacon.
- The deacon leader will serve for one year then together with the fellow deacons, will re-evaluate serving as Deacon Leader for another term.

2. Fellow Deacons

The other deacons within the Deacon Body are responsible for:

- Following the leadership of the Lead Deacon.
- Assist the Lead Deacon in strategizing how to best care for the congregation's material needs.
- Proactively care for those within Redeemer Church.

Using Spiritual Gifts as a Deacon

Like every church member, a deacon possesses certain spiritual gifts as a part of his unique relationship to our Lord and his personal experience. Also like each church member, a deacon experiences the fullness of knowing Christ as he uses this gifts to further the kingdom. The list below represents the spiritual gifts listed throughout scripture.

Leadership

Leadership aids the body by leading and directing members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the church. Leadership motivates people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8).

Administration

Persons with the gift of administration lead the body by steering others to remain on task. Administration enables the body to organize according to God-given purposes and long-term goals (1 Cor. 12:28).

Teaching

Teaching is instructing members in the truths and doctrines of God's Word for the purposes of building up, unifying, and maturing the body (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11). However, ability to teach is not a required qualification for a deacon.

Knowledge

The gift of knowledge manifests itself in teaching and training in discipleship. It is the God-given ability to learn, know, and explain the precious truths of God's Word. A word of knowledge is a Spirit-revealed truth (1 Cor. 12:28).

Wisdom

Wisdom is the gift that discerns the work of the Holy Spirit in the body and applies His teachings and actions to the needs of the body (1 Cor. 12:28).

Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is proclaiming the Word of God boldly. This builds up the body and leads to conviction of sin. Prophecy manifests itself in preaching, teaching and exhorting (1 Cor. 12:10; Rom. 12:6).

Discernment

Discernment aids the body by recognizing the true intentions of those within or related to the body. Discernment tests the message and actions of others for the protection and well-being of the body (1 Cor. 12:10).

Exhortation

Possessors of this gift encourage members to be involved in and enthusiastic about the work of the Lord. Members with this gift are good counselors and motivate others to service. Exhortation exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and other ministry scenarios (Rom. 12:8).

Faith

Faith trusts God to work beyond the human capabilities of the people. Believers with this gift encourage others to trust in God in the face of apparently insurmountable odds (1 Cor. 12:9).

Evangelism

God gifts his church with evangelists to lead others to Christ effectively and enthusiastically. This gift builds up the body by adding new members to its fellowship (Eph. 4:11).

Service

Those with the gift of service recognize practical needs in the body and joyfully give assistance to meeting those needs. Christians with this gift do not mind working behind the scenes (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7).

Mercy

Cheerful acts of compassion characterize those with the gift of mercy. Persons with this gift aid the body by sympathizing with hurting members. They keep the body healthy and unified by keeping others aware of the needs within the church (Rom. 12:8).

Giving

Members with the gift of giving give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Cheerfulness and willingness are characteristics of individuals with this gift (Rom. 12:8).

Hospitality

Those with this gift have the ability to make visitors, guests, and strangers feel at ease. They often use their home to entertain guests. Persons with this gift integrate new members into the body (1 Pet. 4:9).

Spiritual gifts do not always remain the same throughout one's life and are not synonymous with ones' natural talents. We encourage you to pray over how God has uniquely gifted you and how He desires you to glorify Him in the exercising of those gifts in the role of deacon.

PRAYER & FASTING RESOURCE FOR DEACONS

A deacon will encounter many difficult situations and problems within the life of the church and prayer will be the most important and valuable resource available to them.

The information below is adapted from Campus Crusade for Christ – Prayer & Fasting Journal. The Journal suggests twelve (12) five minute increments of time to equal sixty (60) minutes of prayer. Even if you cannot devote that much time at one sitting, the way that this information is organized will help you become more serious about your prayer life.

1. PRAISE - Psalm 63:3; Hebrews 13:15; Matthew 6:9

Prayer should begin with a recognition of God's nature. The Lord's Prayer—our model for praying—begins with "Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." Praise is that aspect of prayer which vocally esteems God for His virtues and accomplishments.

2. WAITING - Psalm 37:7; Isaiah 40:31; Lamentations 3:25

Not only should we begin prayer with praise, but time also should be given to being "quiet" in God's presence. The original Hebrew text of Psalms 37:7, "rest in the Lord," really means "be still" in the Lord. This is not meditation, or just a time for listening; it is simply taking time to let God love you.

3. CONFESSION Psalm 139:23-24; Psalm 51:10-11; 1 John 1:9

The Psalmist asked God to search his heart for unconfessed sin. He knew sin was one of the greatest roadblocks to answered prayer (see Psalm 66:18). Early in the prayer we need to make time for confession. This clears the way for powerful praying.

4. THE WORD - 2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 19:7-8

“The commandment of the Lord (God’s word) is pure, enlightening the eyes,” wrote a young King David. When we bring God’s word into our prayer we are opening our eyes to new possibilities in God. At this point in prayer we **read** God’s word.

5. INTERCESSION 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Psalm 2:8; Matthew 9:37-38

Our prayer now centers on intercession for a lost and dying world. This concerns praying for others who have desperate needs. Of course, intercession is one aspect of prayer where 5 minutes will never do. You may need more time with this portion of your prayer.

6. PETITION - Matthew 7:7; Matthew 6:11; James 4:2

This aspect of prayer concerns our personal needs. Petition is included in the Lord’s Prayer in the expression, “Give us this day our daily bread.” To petition God is to open our need to God through prayer.

7. THE WORD Jeremiah 23:29; 2 Samuel 22:31; Numbers 23:19

Bringing God’s word into prayer is so important it appears twice on our list. Earlier we suggested you **read** God’s word. Now we **pray** God’s word. Here we bring actual Scripture into our prayer. We can never pray out of God’s will when we pray God’s word.

8. THANKSGIVING Philippians 4:6; Psalm 100:4

When Paul wrote to the Philippians he instructed them to offer prayer and supplication “with thanksgiving.” Thus, thanksgiving should occupy more than a single aspect of our prayer – it should be sprinkled throughout. Thanksgiving differs from praise in that praise recognizes God for who He is, while thanksgiving recognizes God for specific things He has done.

9. SINGING Psalm 100:2; Ephesians 5:19; Psalm 144:9

Melody in its purest sense is a gift of God for the purpose of singing praises unto Him. Many Christians, unfortunately, have never learned the beauty of singing a “new” song unto God melody. After all, Paul spoke of singing “spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19). To sing unto the Lord is to worship God in melody.

10. MEDITATION Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-2; Psalm 77:12

To wait in God’s presence is simply to be there to love Him. Meditation differs in that our mind is very active. To meditate is to ponder spiritual themes in reference to God. In fact, only once in Scripture do we find God specifically promising success and prosperity. It is God’s gift to those who meditate day and night in God’s word (Joshua 1:8).

11. LISTENING

Ecclesiastes 5:2; 1 Kings 19:11-12

Whether through His written word or by an inner “still, small voice” of His Holy Spirit, God speaks to praying Christians. But we must take time to listen. **Listening** is different from both **waiting** and **meditation**. Here we listen for direct orders from our Heavenly Father concerning activities of our day.

12. PRAISE

Matthew 6:13; Psalm 100:4; Psalm 150

There is an imaginary door to every prayer time with a sign affixed that simply reads – “praise.” We must always enter prayer through this door. And when prayer moves toward its conclusion we must look for this same door. We begin our prayer by recognizing God’s nature, and we end in similar fashion. Jesus taught this when He ended His prayer with the statement, “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen!” Thus, we have a simple twelve (12) step plan for filling an hour with meaningful prayer.

These are just suggestions—everyone has a different prayer life. However, developing such a prayer habit will not only change you, but the world around you as well!

Fasting Resource Guide

How you as a deacon begin and conduct your fast will largely determine your success. We offer these seven (7) steps to help you make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding.

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| <i>Helpful Steps to Biblical Fasting</i> |
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Step 1 – Set your objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Step 2 – Make your commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

-How long will you fast—one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, 40 days. (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)

-The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often.)

-What physical or social activities you will restrict.

-How much time each day you will devote to pray and read God's word.

Step 3 – Prepare yourself spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Ask God to help you bring to the surface of your heart any unrepented of sins
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance & accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all those who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; Luke 17:3-4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14-15
- Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9-10; 103:1-8 & 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16-17).

Step 4 – Prepare yourself physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision. Do not rush your fast. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.

Step 5 – Put yourself on a schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Step 6 – Expect results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh,

new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

The Deacon's Humility

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:5-8

The quality that permeates the office of deacon is humility. This office is not a stepping stone to being a pastor but a position that simply seeks to serve.

Jesus came to serve, and He is the ultimate example for how deacons are to minister to their brothers and sisters. As they will inevitably be looked upon as a type of leader within the church, the humility exemplified by Christ should be the heart posture of anyone who serves as deacon.

Servant leadership is exemplified when Deacons:

1. Are overwhelmed with their own spiritual need.
2. Are compassionate; have a forgiving spirit; look for the best in others.
3. Esteem all others better than self.
4. Have a dependent spirit; recognize others' needs.
5. Surrender control.
6. Are willing to yield the right to be right.
7. Have a giving spirit.
8. Are self-denying.
9. Are motivated to serve others.

10. Desire to be faithful to make others a success
11. Desire to promote others
12. Have a sense of unworthiness; are thrilled to be used at all; are eager to give others credit.
13. Rejoice when others are lifted up
14. Think, "I don't deserve to serve in this ministry! But by God's grace, this is where He has me!"
15. Know that they really have nothing to offer to God.
16. Are humbled by how much they have to learn.
17. Risk getting close to others.
18. Accept personal responsibility; can see where they are wrong.
19. Receive criticism with a humble, open heart
20. Do not seek to wear a mask around others.
21. Are willing to be transparent with others.
22. Are quick to admit fault and to seek forgiveness.
23. Take the initiative to be reconciled; gets there first.
24. Compare themselves with the holiness of God and feel desperate for mercy.
25. Continually sense their need for the Holy Spirit.