

# Deacons

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Date: 24 May 2015

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're looking at this subject of how the church grows and develops. Two weeks ago we looked at gifts being parts of the body of Christ.

! So the gifts that we have is equivalent to us being a part of the body of Christ. And in Ephesians 4.16 it tells us that this is how the church grows, as each part pulls together and does its work. So we looked at that, we had a little discussion of that on Wednesday. And then last week we looked at this subject quite quickly, but we looked at the subject of, it's not actually one word, the software seems to have decided that's one word and broken it up in the very last syllable, but it's several words.

Elders, bishops, overseers, shepherds, pastors, presbyters, in the New Testament it's all the same thing. These are the people, the men who lead the church in the individual congregations.

Yep. Yep. The men who lead and guide and shepherd and teach. And it is men. I know it's a controversial point, but I think the Bible is quite clear that the authoritative leadership in the church is through men, because the church of all institutions is meant to reflect the creation order as it ought to be.

[ 1 : 33 ] It might be very different in business or in school or in police force, but in the church that is meant to reflect how things, the deepest reality of how things ought to be.

And today we're going to be looking at the subject of the deacons who serve and minister to the church and in the church. I'm just going to turn around and see whether that's visible.

You can see that. I could see it if I was turning the other way. Right. We're all happy on that. If I get to a part where the writing is too small, you have to tell me.

Not that I can do anything about it now, but I shall know for another time. Right. Deacons. Deacons. So what is a deacon? What is this word?

Deacons. Deacon. Like ditchling. Ditchling deacon. Ditchling deacon. No, no, that's not. That's a beacon. A bonfire.

[ 2 : 33 ] That's a beacon. That's not a deacon. A thing that you, when you're hunting ducks, things that you, a thing that you, makes a quacking noise to deceive ducks.

No, that's not a deacon. That's a decoy. Oh, dear, oh, dear. A deacon. A deacon. It's a jug in which they serve ale in Lord of the Rings or Game of Thrones or something like that.

No, that's not a deacon. That's a flagon. I've no idea how you've got those mixed up. A deacon is a person. And if you want to have an idea in your mind, don't have the idea of a bonfire or a duck deception or a jug for ale.

But think of a waiter. When you last went and had a cup of coffee at Moe's and they said, take a seat, I'll bring your coffee to you.

The person who brought you the coffee was a deacon. That's what it means. It's the sort of servant in particular who brings stuff to your table.

[ 3 : 41 ] A table waiter. A servant in Greek, diakonos, which gets turned into English deacon. So that's the word deacon. It's a servant.

And it can be rather interchangeable with just servant in general or slave in general. But if you had a particular idea of the servant, it's a servant who distributes something or a servant who brings you something.

So a table waiter is not such a bad idea. A servant who gives you something. So we shall go through the material or attempt to go through the material in the Bible.

In a reasonably prompt way. Where does this deacon stuff come from? Now elders, of course, we found in the Old Testament. But I don't think deacons comes from the Old Testament.

It comes from Jesus. Jesus who is the deacon or the servant. And that's what we read in Mark 10 right at the beginning. And that's what Mark quoted to us.

[ 4 : 44 ] I think he had a slip of the tongue and said it was Matthew 10. But actually it's Mark chapter 10 with these famous words, which I'll read to you. Mark 10, 42.

Jesus called them together and said, You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, your diakonos. Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

Doulos meaning slave. But even the son of man did not come to be served. He didn't come to be deaconed. But to serve. But to deacon.

And to give his life as a ransom for many. The deaconing thing comes from Jesus. Because he is the great servant. The great one who serves us.

[ 5 : 44 ] The salvation of Jesus is an act of service. So I know some of you have got links with the catering industry. And cooking stuff up.

Taking it out. Serving it to people at table. All of that. And all the thinking behind that. All the way of thinking.

That's exactly the way of thinking Jesus had. In the way he saves people. It may come as a little bit of a surprise too. If you're not used to Christian things. You might think that Christianity is about being good.

And trying your best. Well that's not entirely absent from Christianity. But that's certainly not the keynote. The keynote is. The first thing is.

We messed it up. We don't do what we should do. We're not good people. And we need somebody else to come and clean up after us.

[ 6 : 45 ] We need somebody to do that for us. That we can't do for ourselves. And Jesus came to serve us. Is that a good thing do you think?

I think it's brilliant. Absolutely tremendous. The salvation of Jesus is via his service. And he leaves us this example to follow.

Now that's where it comes from. And because service is so deeply characteristic of the Christian life. This idea. This word diakonia. Deaconing.

Is used in a general way. For all sorts of Christian service. So here's an interesting verse. 1 Corinthians 3 verse 5. Where Paul is trying to give his readers.

An idea of the relative importance. Of the people. The Christian missionaries. That have been doing stuff. And the Corinthians want to sort of make idols out of them.

[ 7 : 46 ] And worship them. And say you know. I'm for Apollos. I'm for Paul. I'm for Peter. And Paul is saying. Who do you think these guys are anyway? What are they?

What is Apollos? What is Paul? Only servants. Diakonos. Through whom you came to believe. As the Lord assigned to each his task.

I planted the seed. That was my bit. Apollos watered it. He came. And perhaps did Bible studies with you. And explained things that you hadn't understood. But the person who made it grow was God.

He's the important one. He's the one you should be worshipping. We just did our bit. It's interesting. That when he talks about ministry. In that. And service.

He uses the word diakonos for that. And he uses it in other places. For example. In Ephesians 3.7. I became a servant of the gospel. Or if you like. A minister of the gospel.

[ 8 : 44 ] And the word he uses there is diakonos. By the gift of God's grace given to me. And he refers to his friend Tychicus. As a dear brother and faithful servant.

That's in Ephesians 6.21. Tychicus the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord. Well what does he do? He does all sorts of things. He comes and prays with you.

He comes and encourages with you. He shares news with you. Takes things to and fro. Probably takes some of the meetings. And overall. And all that general activity.

Is diakonos. It's service. It's giving you something. And he will bring news. It says I'm sending him for this very purpose. So all Christian ministry.

It's many many different shapes and sizes. Has the nature of service. And you can use that word diakonos for it. So I don't know.

[ 9 : 45 ] All sorts of Christian service. Somebody perhaps greeted you. When you came into the building this morning. And they served you by welcoming you. Maybe you've been prayed for by somebody.

Maybe you're praying for somebody. That's a service. It's a giving service. Maybe somebody said an encouraging word to you this morning. Or maybe somebody will say an encouraging word to you before you leave.

They might say it's been good to see you. They might say I've been wondering how you are. I've been thinking about you and your family. Something like that.

That's encouraging isn't it? It makes you feel that you are worth something. Which is exactly what you are. Maybe somebody will listen to you. Maybe they will give you attention.

How are you? Oh I feel miserable. What's been happening? Oh first of all the washing machine broke down. Then the kettle fell on my toe.

[ 10 : 47 ] Then I heard something. Et cetera, et cetera. And if somebody listens, it's actually a gift isn't it? You might think a listener does nothing. But actually a listener gives you the gift of their attention.

And there's all sorts of things. So somebody will have set out chairs. Somebody will have switched on the PA. Somebody's hopefully twiddling the buttons even now.

All of these things are gifts. And we could put them under the heading of service like that.

And while everyone in the New Testament is called to service. The New Testament does seem to recognize some people particularly. You would sort of give them a capital S or a capital D.

As official servants or official deacons. So that the general becomes particularized in some individuals. That seems to be the pattern.

[ 11 : 46 ] Let's look at that. So would you please, if you have got your Bible there. See with your own eyes in your own Bible. Philippians chapter 1 verse 1.

Where in addressing the church at Philippi. Paul and Timothy. So they're saying I want to address you lot.

You dear people at Philippi. And how does he address them? So the writer gives his own name first.

Paul and Timothy. Servants. Doulos. In that case slaves. Of Christ Jesus. To all the saints. In Christ Jesus.

So the saints. Saints doesn't mean a particular elite. Of spiritual superstars. It just means Christians.

[ 12 : 42 ] To all the people who have been made holy. By believing in Jesus Christ. To all the saints. In Christ Jesus at Philippi. Together with. And then he singles out two groups of people.

The overseers. The episkopos. So that would be in English. Bishops. And. Deacons. The diakonos. Diakonos is singular. But I'm not trying to confuse everybody. So he does seem to single out. In your church. You've got everybody. And you have. Two groups of people.

Worthy of mention. The overseers. The elders. So we greet them. And the deacons. Apparently there's a group of deacons. At least more than one deacon. Servants.

With a capital S. They seem to be recognized. As a particular group of people. Having a. You know. Recognized. If you like. Officially. Should we put it that way. And if you turn to 1 Timothy chapter 3.

[ 13 : 43 ] He seems to be. Addressing. The church. It's in Ephesus. That he's writing to. Unless I've.

Unless I'm mistaken. And he says. You need to get. The church. Back on the right. Lines. It's. I think the background is.

It's gone off the rails. In certain. Particular ways. And it needs to be put on the rails again. One of the problems is. You've been appointing. The wrong sort of overseers.

So 1 Timothy 3 verse 1. Here's a trustworthy saying. If anyone sets his heart. On being an overseer. He deserves a noble task. Mind you. The overseer must be.

Such and such and such. Which we looked at the other day. So. There's. That. Those important people. I say important. Not because of self-importance.

[ 14 : 38 ] But. They're key. In the amount of good they can do. And the amount of harm they can do. These people. You mustn't get the wrong people as elders. And then.

In verse 8. He. Also. Goes. To some trouble. To describe. The things that. Deacons must be.

Verse 8. Deacons. Likewise. Are to be. Etc. So. There's. Evidence number two. That in the early church. Deaconing.

Was not. Only. A. A term. For general. Christian service. But. There were particular people. Who were. Identified. And named. And known as.

Deacons. And let me give you. One more example. Which is. In Romans. 16. Verse 1. In which. [15:43] In the. Personal greetings. Paul says. I commend. To you. Our sister. Phoebe. She is. A diakonos. Of the church.

In. We would say. Kentria. I think they would probably. Pronounce it differently. Kentria. It's an interesting.

Verse. Does it mean. That she is. She serves. The same way. As everybody else. In the church. At Kentria. It seems. A little strange.

To say. She is a servant. Of the church. In Kentria. If it wasn't. A particular. Designation. Who's. Phoebe. She's.

One of the. Deacon. Ladies. In Kentria. She's. Recognized. As such. That's the. The name. And the. Official. Recognition. That we give her. So I would put that.

[16:39] As. One. Piece. Of evidence. Again. For there being. Identified. People. In. In churches. Who get. This.

Title. Given to them. Interestingly. At. The. If you have. An authorized. Version. I think you'll find. At the end. Of chapter 16. It says something. To the effect.

Of. This letter. Was. Dictated. By Paul. And delivered. By Phoebe. To. Rome. Now. That's. That. Isn't in all.

The versions. It isn't in the NIV. But it's interesting. To think. That maybe. Maybe. She was. One of the services. That she offered. Was to say. I'm up for traveling. Across to Rome.

If you've got a letter. To take. I'll take it. You can trust me. She must have been. A pretty. Gutsy. Sort of lady. I think. To do that sort of thing. There were specific people.

[17:34] Called this. And functioning. As this. And if this was. Jesus's way. For them. In their churches. And it would be. A good thing.

For us. Too. We don't. Mindlessly. Copy. Every single thing. In the New Testament. So we don't. Have to have.

A mindless. Copy. Of incest. Like they did. In. One Corinthians. But. If there's a pattern. That seems. To have. Approval.

Then. That would be. A good thing. To copy. So. Creeping up. On the subject. So here's a question. Jesus is.

Lord of the church. How does he. Rule the church. And. It's actually. A bit of a. Controversial area. But I would suggest. This is. About right. He forbids.

[18:30] Certain things. So we know. That Jesus. Forbade. Trying to serve. Two masters. I haven't put the reference. But you probably know. That one off by heart. Jesus said. You cannot serve.

Two masters. You cannot serve. God. And money. Either you will hate. The one. And love the other. Or you will love. The one. And hate the other. You can't do it. So it's a sort of. Forbidding thing.

And Jesus. Commanded things. For some things. He said. I definitely. Want you to do this. So interestingly. He said. About the Lord's. Supper. Do this. In remembrance. Of me. He didn't say. Well I'd advise you. To do. You might think about it. He said. Do this. So that seems. To bear the. Quality of a command. Love one another. As I have loved you.

By this. Will all men know. That you are my disciples. If you love one another. He commands. Certain things. And he gives. Principles.

[19:25] About certain things. So he says. It is better. To give. Than to receive. That seems to me. On the level. Of a. Value statement. So it's not saying.

Don't ever receive anything. But he says. There's a. There's more of a blessing. In giving. Than receiving. So if you have the opportunity. If you have the opportunity. To receive.

Well do so graciously. If you have the opportunity. To give. There's something better. About that. And there are. Sort of principles. By which you can. Evaluate. This is good. That's better.

In this situation. That would be a good idea. In this situation. That would be a good idea. And there's a sort of. Wisdom. That is called for. So. Three things.

Sometimes. Jesus forbids things. Sometimes. He commands things. Sometimes. He just gives us. Principles. And we steer our way. Through. Situations. According to the principles.

[ 20 : 20 ] And. There is freedom. In the Bible. It is for freedom. Christ has set us free. Galatians 5 verse 1. One of the things.

The gospel brings. Is freedom. So. We haven't. Got. To get. Too tangled up. Are we getting. Such and such. Exactly right.

Has he forbidden it. Well if he's forbidden it. Don't do it. Has he commanded it. If he's commanded it. Let's do it. If he's given us. Principles. Let's understand the principles. And work within those principles.

If he hasn't told us. Quite specifically. Then we're free. As long as we're not. Disobeying a command. And we're fitting in.

With the principles. There is freedom. Freedom is a gospel thing. Christian churches. Have liberty. So here's some examples. Of things.

[ 21 : 15 ] That we're free over. If you're a slave. Says Paul. That's fine. If you have a chance. To get your freedom. And you'd like to do that. Then take it. You're free.

To do either of those. If. You know. You're supposed to sing. We meet together. To sing. But you don't.

That's not all you do. And at some point. You have to. Say well we're free. To stop singing now. And we'll do something else. It isn't commanded. There isn't a command. That says thou shalt. Sing for. 33% of thy meetings together.

Or 73.4%. There's a freedom. You know. You're tired of singing. If you had enough. Well we'll sit down. And we'll. We'll listen. Are you tired of listening. Well let's sing something. There's freedom. In things like that. Timing of meetings. The New Testament. Doesn't say. Thou shalt meet at 11 o'clock. And 6.30. In fact. In the New Testament.

[ 22 : 10 ] I'm heading for dangerous ground here. But in the New Testament. They seem to be working on Sunday. And so they would meet in the evening. And most of the recorded meetings. Certainly in the book of Acts. They meet in the evening.

And marriage. Well you're not commanded to marry. And you're not commanded to be single. God gives different gifts to different people. And you can choose who you can marry. So there's freedom in all sorts of things.

And there isn't only one career. That Christians have to have. There's all sorts of freedom. And I think in this matter of deacons. There is a degree. A real degree. Of freedom to the churches. In how they particularly implement this. So I'm going to look at the forbidding. And the commanding. And the principles. And this. The writing on this one.

I think is a bit small. So what does he forbid? He does forbid. The wrong sort of people. Becoming deacons. So let's go back to the 1 Timothy 3.

[ 23 : 10 ] And see. What he says. Should not happen. Because I think it is. It's not saying. If somebody. If you can tick all these boxes.

They should be a deacon. The way it's working is. If they don't tick the boxes. They should not be a deacon. So 1 Timothy 3. 8 deacons.

Likewise. In other words. Like. What we've been saying. About elders. Are to be. Well if you've got the. New international version.

You'll see. They are to be men. It doesn't have that. In the original. It just has. It goes straight on. To. This word. Worthy. Of respect. It's a word.

To do with the mind. And it's really. He's saying something like. Serious minded. Not. Airheads. Not. Not. Completely.

[ 24 : 06 ] Vacuous. People. Who you can't count on. To say anything. Serious. They're just. In it for a giggle. Or a laugh. He says. No. They don't want that sort of person. Being a deacon.

They've got to be somebody. Worthy of respect. Somebody with some. Some seriousness. About them. And then. The next word is. Sincere. In. The original.

It says. Not. Too talking. Not the sort of person. Who will tell you one thing. One day. And one thing. Another. Or say one thing. To one person. And then. The opposite. To another. They've got to have. An integrity.

About them. They're not. Indulging. In much wine. Or they're not. Headed. Towards. Much wine. Doesn't say.

They don't drink. At all. But it says. We don't want people. With a weakness. For alcohol. Who are under the power. Of alcohol. Who are perhaps. Addicted to it.

[ 25 : 00 ] One of my friends. Who knows. People in the. Houses of parliament. Says there are actually. A lot of MPs. Who are high functioning. Alcoholics. And I have to say.

That the bible says. Okay. Maybe. Maybe that's what. MPs do. And maybe they can manage it. But in the church. We're not to have. That. So somebody comes along.

And they're sitting there. Well they're the MP. For. Brighton Pavilion. I ought to be an elder. If I'm an MP. Well I'm afraid. I shouldn't have been. Quite so specific.

Should I. But. If you. Whatever else. If the person. Is headed towards. Too much alcohol. They should not be a deacon. They must keep.

Hold. Of the mystery. Of the faith. With a clear conscience. So they've got to understand. The truth of the gospel. They've got to be gospel people. And they've got to hold that.

[ 25 : 57 ] In a clear conscience. There's got to be an integrity. And a consistency. About it. So they're not living. The opposite. Of what they claim to believe. They must.

Let them first. Be tested. So Paul seems to envisage. He doesn't say exactly. How you test. But they should be. You know. Like you do.

With. Like you do. With. I can't think of an example. Something you try out. And test. So you test paint. By painting a little bit somewhere.

And making sure. That it doesn't fry. The thing that you're painting onto. Or if you. Sorry. A probationary period. Well it could be a probationary period. Yes. Yeah.

It just says you try them. And test them. I don't mean put on trial. But you know. Give somebody a responsibility. See if they can do it. Because people sometimes say.

[ 26 : 52 ] They can do some things. And then when you try them. They say. They don't actually manage to do it at all. So. A testedness. And if they are. Unaccusable.

If there's nothing against them. Let them deacon. That's down to verse 10. And then. This verse. Is controversial. Verse 11.

In the same way. So. There's another. In the same way. So. The word. Their. Women. Are to be. Worthy of respect. Respect. So. As you may. Or may not remember. There isn't. There isn't. A particular word. In the New Testament.

To distinguish. Woman. From wife. Like in French. Ma femme. Means my. My woman. My wife. So. Is this. Talking about.

[ 27 : 46 ] Is he changed now. To lady deacons. In the same way. The women. So. The women deacons. Must be worthy of respect. Or. Is he saying. The wives.

Of the deacons. I do tend. To think. That he's talking about. The wives. Of the deacons. Could be the other way. But. Let's.

Either way. He's saying. That these two. Must be. Worthy of respect. Same word. As used before. Serious minded. People whose minds.

Are on the gospel. And they hold that. With. Real. Weightiness. Not. Diabolical. That's the original. Word. A diabolical. Deacon. Or a diabolical. Wife. It's actually. A slanderer. That's what.

[ 28 : 44 ] Diabolical. Literally means. Of course. The devil. Slanders. Doesn't he. Hence. We. We. We. Think of it. We. We. We. Think of it. As. Referring. To that. Particular. Spiritual.

Person. But the idea. Is more general. Than that. And so. It's translated here. Not malicious.

Talkers. Very important. That. Because. Somebody.

Who has a. Official. Capacity. In the church. Will get to know. Things. Perhaps. That other people. Don't know. Perhaps. Secrets. That are confided.

They ought to remain secrets. If they were said. If they were said. In confidence. They should stay. In confidence. And. Particularly. The. The women. Can I put this.

How can I put this. Without exposing myself to. I don't think. I'll even bother. What is. Said here. Is. Is about. Talk.

[ 29 : 40 ] And. Everybody knows. How juicy. It is. To. Communicate. Some. Fault.

Some failing. Some shortcoming. Of somebody else. And. In this case. He says. That's a particular thing. That we don't want. With these women. Whether they're the deacon's wives.

Or whether they're the lady deacons. Not slanderers. Temperate. Meaning. Sober. Self-controlled. They don't fly off in all directions. And. Trustworthy. Faithful. In everything. So. These women. Are to be.

I think we would say. Good examples. Of what it is to be a Christian. So. We're left with either. It's the lady deacons. Who are.

[ 30 : 35 ] To be this. Or. It is. The wives. Of the men. Who would be deacons. Yeah. The NIV.

Says. Their wives. Yes. And then he goes on to this. Verse 12. Which makes me think. There's the link. The deacon. Must be the husband. Of but one wife.

And must marry his. Must manage. His children. And household. Well. And here again. I don't think. He's telling us. That you can't have a deacon. Who is a single man.

That's not. The purpose. Of this. List. Of characteristics. He's saying. If. He's. A married man. It's got to be.

A Christian marriage. We don't want. A bigamous marriage. We don't want him. Having a mistress. He's the husband. Of one wife. And. In the family.

[ 31 : 30 ] Family is particularly. Important. As a. Sort of. Prototype. Of the church. A church. Is a family. And the.

The running. Of the church. Is very akin. To the running. Of a family. And if the deacon. Can't run his family. Then he won't be able. To be much use. In the church. He must manage.

His children. And his household. Well. So. The word. Well. Or good. Is repeated. So I put it. He must. He must. Leading his children.

And his whole household. Good. Those who have. Served. Well. Those who have. Deaconed. Good.

Gain. A good. Standing. And great assurance. In their faith. In Christ Jesus. Jesus. So the. The scrutiny. On the.

[ 32 : 27 ] The deacon's. Family. Is that. Functioning well. Would you. In any sense. Look and say. That's how.

That's how. To. Bring up a family. Um. Um. Um. And. Then the promise. That goes.

After it. Those who have. Deaconed well. Gain. Not quite sure. The. The exact. Meaning. Of what he's saying. But. It's sort of. Uh.

A standing. And I suppose. He's saying. That if. If you stuck your neck out. And been a deacon. It enables you. To. To feel that. Yeah. You get a bit of feedback.

I have served. It's been recognized. They gain. A good standing. And great. Boldness. Assurance. In their faith.

[ 33 : 21 ] In Christ Jesus. Which is. An interesting promise. Isn't it? So. 1 Timothy 3. 8. I think. Is saying. Is really.

Forbidding. The wrong sort of people. To be deacons. Don't get the wrong sort of people. As deacons. So deacons. I've put in. Quite small writing there.

Deacons must be without. Major character. And behavior flaws. Their wives must be able. To combine well. With their partner. In this character. And in this behavior.

That. No. Don't. Take what I've said in context. Please don't sort of. Play back the recording of this. And write it down. Word for word. Phil said that. That. I mean. Think. Think about what is actually getting at. But I think I've tried to represent. The. What that passage is.

[ 34 : 18 ] Getting at. We want. There is. A sense in which. It's important. That the right. Character of person. Is a deacon. And we don't have the wrong. Character of person.

As a deacon. So that's forbidding. Second thing. What does he command? Well. In terms of. Deaconing. He commands us all. To be servants.

We all. To have. The attitude of a servant. He commands us all. To have. The servant. Mind set. Please look at. Philippians. Chapter 2.

Because I can't find. A particular command. That says. You need. You must appoint deacons. But I can find. In the Bible. That all of you. Should be thinking. In a servant.

Like way. And Philippians 2. 5. It says. Your. Mind. Your attitude. Should be the same.

[ 35 : 14 ] As that of Christ Jesus. This is a command. For everybody. How did Jesus Christ. Think. Well. He was in. In very nature.

God. He did not. Count equality. With God. Something to be. Hung on to. At all costs. But he made himself. A nobody. He made himself. Nothing. Taking the very.

Nature. Of a servant. And being found. Being made in human likeness. Being found in appearance. As a man. He humbled himself. And became obedient. To death.

Even death. On a cross. And. We're all. To have that. Servant attitude. And we're told. That therefore. God. Exalted him.

To the highest place. God. So. Valued. This. As to say. This. Is such a brilliant thing. My son has done. Exalt him. To the highest place. Give him the name.

[ 36 : 08 ] That is above every name. That at the name of Jesus. Every knee should bow. And every tongue confess. Jesus Christ is Lord. Such a precious attitude.

And. It isn't just that golden passage. In Philippians 2. That reflects on this. As you go a little bit further. Paul says. In verse 19 and 20.

I hope in the Lord Jesus. To send Timothy to you soon. That I also may be cheered. When I receive news about you. I have no one else like him. Who takes a genuine interest.

In your welfare. For everyone looks out. For his own interests. Not those of Jesus Christ. And he says that. You know. Timothy is a particular example.

Of this mindset. And it's interesting that Paul says. I haven't got anybody else like him. It's actually quite rare. Although every Christian. Is commanded to have this mindset.

[ 37 : 06 ] It's actually quite rare. To find people. Who really take this on board. That's what it says. It's rare attitude. Is found in Timothy.

So we're commanded. To have that attitude. And in terms of deacons. There's. Well there's a pattern. In the New Testament.

And I think perhaps. That's not quite the same thing. As a command. But it does have the force. Of saying. This is the way Jesus. Approved of it being. Well you know. What's the problem with you. Doing this too. He gives a pattern. In the church. Of having deacons. And the deacons. Exemplify service. Say. Who are the people.

Who have this rare attitude. Oh. These deacons do. They crystallize service. So we need. You know. The.

[ 38 : 03 ] Need the washing up done. Who will lead us in that. Well. It's a sort of deaconing thing. Perhaps we had a deacon. For washing up. And who will lead. Who will gather people around.

And say. Come on guys. This is what we need. To be doing. The deacons. So that was. The commands. Things are forbidden.

Things commanded. And what are the principles. Well. I think. There are. Broadly. The principles. In Acts. Chapter 6.

Which. So please turn to Acts. Chapter 6. And I think in this. Example. There are.

It isn't just. An example. Like a rock in the sky. That doesn't connect to anything. But I think this. Has got principles in it. But I think we have to be careful. We don't push it beyond.

[ 39 : 00 ] What it's saying. And. Sort of a matter of. Spiritual discernment. As to. How such principles.

Would be applied. Let me read you the passage. Acts. Chapter 6. You spot the word. Deacons in here. In those days. When the number of disciples. Was increasing. The Grecian Jews.

Among them. Complained against. The Hebraic Jews. Because their widows. Were being overlooked. In the daily distribution. Of food. So the twelve.

The twelve gathered. All the disciples together. And said. It would not be right. For us to neglect. The word of God. In order to wait on tables. Brothers.

Choose seven men. From among you. Who are known to be full of the spirit. And wisdom. We will turn this responsibility. Over to them. And we will give our attention. To prayer. And the ministry of the word.

[ 39 : 57 ] And the proposal. Pleas'd the whole group. They chose Stephen. A man full of faith. And of the Holy Spirit. Also Philip. Procurus. Nicanor. Timon. Parmenas. Nicholas.

And Antioch. A convert to Judaism. They presented these men. To the apostles. Who prayed. And laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread.

The number of disciples. In Jerusalem. Increased rapidly. And a large number of priests. Became obedient to the faith. So please notice. The context of this.

It is really. An attack on the church. So the church. In those early days. Was attacked. From without. From outside. With persecution. But here's an attack.

From the inside. Where the. Greek. Community. Say. To the Hebrew community.

[ 40 : 52 ] However they'd say it. In whatever accent. They'd say. Hey. You're missing us out. Just because we don't. Speak your language. And just because we don't. Look like you.

You're not. Giving us the food. You give. Give food out. To the needy widows. Every day. And you keep on missing us out. We just get the. The rubbish chips.

At the bottom of the bag. All the burnt ones. And so you can see. The. The potential. For. Disunity. So that could really.

Stop the church. In its tracks. And you notice. That the end. Of the passage. It hasn't been stopped. In its tracks. Verse seven. So the word of God. Spread. And. That we'll assume.

That the word. So is. Is. Is correct. Because of solving. This particular problem. Getting this right. The word of God. Spread. So what did they do? Well.

[ 41 : 47 ] Notice here. That practical need. Was the trigger. There was. A. A. Practical need. Oh incidentally. Did you see the word. Deacon there anywhere? No.

No. It gets. This passage. Gets brought into the discussion. Not because the word. Deacon is there. But the word. Deaconing. Is there. And it's there.

In verse one. The daily. Deaconing. Of food. Distribution. It's translated as. And it's also there. In verse two. We shouldn't.

Neglect. The word of God. The word ministry. Isn't in there. We shouldn't neglect. The word of God. In order to. Deacon. Tables. It's hidden there.

As a. As a. As a verb. And in verse four. It's there too. We will give our attention. To prayer. And. The deaconing. The deaconing. Of the word.

[ 42 : 44 ] So. Although. The word. The noun. Deacon. Is not there. The activity. Of. Deaconing. Is there. However many times.

I just said three. Was it? Okay. So that's why. It gets brought into. This discussion. So. They sold this. By appointing people. To do deaconing.

And it wouldn't be. Totally. Ridiculous. To say. They were deacons. Well they did deaconing. At any way. So it's not mentioned. As a noun. But it's mentioned.

As a verb. Now what. Is going on here. People being overlooked. People complain.

Verse two. The twelve. Gather all the disciples. Together. And say. Well one thing's clear. Although we could. Sort this out ourselves. It would not be pleasing. It would not be right. For us to stop doing.

[ 43 : 39 ] What apostles do. And sort out the chips. And whatever else. You're eating. I don't know. The muesli. The beef burgers. I don't know. Whether they're into.

High cholesterol diets. Or whatever. You know. We could do that. We could count them out. Make sure everybody got the right ones. But it would be wrong for us. To stop doing what apostles do. To do this.

So. So. The word and prayer. Is what we do. Said the apostles. And that needs to be safeguarded. And I have to say. That later on in the Bible.

That's not the only thing that apostles do. Paul does some deaconing. He actually cuts short his evangelism. To do some deaconing. And to take a gift. To a needy church.

So even the principles. That I'm describing here. Are not. You know. Water tight. Cast iron principles. So what principles does he give?

[ 44 : 35 ] Just bear with me. Okay. So the practical need. Which is. In this case. It is a practical need.

He says. It would not be right for us. To neglect the word of God. In order to deacon tables. Verse three. Brothers. Choose seven men. From among you.

Who are known to be full of the spirit. And wisdom. And I find that quite interesting. Because if it was just counting out. Beef burgers. Chips. And dolloping out baked beans. Let's just imagine that. You'd think.

Well. Anybody can do that. As long as they've got. The right number of hands and eyes. But he says. No. No. Actually. This is such a matter. That we need. We need to have.

I don't know why I say these things. Why do I bother? We need spiritually minded people. Because it isn't just.

[ 45 : 31 ] Just a counting exercise. There's a spiritual. Responsibility here. And. I find that quite interesting. Choose men. Who are known to be full of the spirit.

And wisdom. They need to be. Spiritually. Full. Full of the spirit. And mature. In wisdom. And we're told. In verse five. They chose Stephen.

A man full of the. Full of faith. And of the Holy Spirit. And actually. He goes on to be. A very important preacher. Doesn't he? In the next chapter. But. Just as we saw. In Timothy. Spiritual qualifications. Are important. So we see the same thing here. Now. It's. They say. Choose seven. And choose seven men. Now. Is that at the level. Of principle. Or is that simply. That seven. Would be the right number. For this. The number of. Widows. That you have to look after. [ 46 : 27 ] And that the men. Is simply. That's. That's the choice. That they made. Now. I would say. From the theology. Of deacons.

That you don't have to have seven. And they don't have to be men. The elders have to be men. Because they are. In a position of authority. But the deacons. Whose primary. Characteristic. Is that of service. Could be like Phoebe. And they don't. They don't have to be men. So I think the seven. And the men. Is just. A detail. In this case. I also notice. That the apostles. Don't say. Leave this to us. We'll pick the people. Go back. And wait for our decision. He says. The apostles say. You choose. Who do you feel. Are these spiritually. Capable people. The congregation decides. And they're certainly involved. [ 47 : 22 ] With this. And so. The apostles. Are certainly involved. Two. We will turn. This responsibility. Over to them. And. We. They also.

Verse six. They presented. These men to the apostles. Who prayed. And laid their hands on them. So the apostles. Set them in place. With their blessing. So. Yeah. That's one incident. Let's try not to make it. Bear too much weight. But it does seem to. Have some useful. Principles there. And the result. Is that the problem. Is solved. Not. Which it is. And. The people are pleased. Now. Where does it say that? I'm sure it said that. When I read it. This pleased the whole group. Verse five. This proposal. Pleased the whole group. Now. You. It's a mistake to run a church. On trying to please everybody. All the time. But it's very nice. When people are pleased. And in this case. This proposal. [ 48 : 19 ] Pleased the whole group. Verse five. And the word of God. Spread. Verse seven. So. Something happened there. Didn't it? Some problem was solved.

Something was advanced. And I remember hearing somebody preach on this. And I was struck by this comment. That this particular spiritual problem. Was not solved at the prayer meeting. By praying about it. I'm sure they did pray about it. But. The substance of the solution. Came at the business meeting. Choose some people. Think about it. Perhaps have a vote. Doesn't tell us how they chose them. Talk to other people. Who do you think. Is this sort of person. And. We'll appoint them. That's business isn't it? That's church business. Shouldn't think that church business is unspiritual. Spiritual problems can be solved. [ 49 : 16 ] At the church business meeting. And I think it is not an exact blueprint. For reasons I've said. But I think there are applicable principles. And then I pointed out. And I put this in this morning.

Which is why it came up. Out of order. Even these principles are flexible. Since Paul himself. At some point in his ministry. At least. Prioritized diakonia. Over preaching. He left the preaching. To go and take resources. Actually take money. To a needy church. That's in Acts 11. And in other places too. And what freedom. Does the Lord of the church give. Well this writing is so small. Even I can't read it. So here's some freedoms. That I think we have. A freedom to assess needs. So. I think we're to look around. And say. Well what are the things. That might be bottlenecks. For us. I don't think it is. We don't have a daily distribution. Of food to widows. [ 50 : 14 ] So it probably isn't that. But there are other things. That can be bottlenecks. So we're actually finding it. Really difficult. To do the DBS scheme. What does DBS stand for? Disclosure and barring.

Yes. And you think. Well that's. What's that got to do with the church? Well actually we have to do that. To comply with good practice. If not the law of the land. That's a bottleneck there. What needs might. We might say. We've got a number of international people. Who need supporting. And helping. And discipling. Any group. Needs people to do minute taking.

And you know. It's a really difficult job. To find anybody. Who will say. They'll take minutes. What was Spurgeon's definition. Of. A meeting.

Oh I don't want. You know it's minutes and hours. Anyway. Let's not go there. Nowadays you need. A website. To be looked after. And that's. You need somebody.

[ 51 : 13 ] Who's spiritually minded. And gifted. To do that. Certainly doesn't mention that. In the Bible. Doesn't say you need. You know. Oh. Oh it does. Yeah. Oh no it doesn't. That's a new thing.

We're free to assess needs. Working out cleaning rotors. Calculating accounts. Answering the phone. Reporting to the government.

And I'm. Tempted to say. We could include. In this deaconing. Word ministry. Which is service. Which is not. In the realm of authority.

But in. But needs dependability. So I'm. Personally I would say. Children's ministry. Is a role where you could say. We don't have to appoint an elder. To look after. Children's ministry.

We could have somebody. To serve as a deacon. Somebody who could. Perhaps. Serve looking after. Women's discipling. Or something like that.

[ 52 : 09 ] That's a suggestion. That wasn't. That was my thought. Freedom to assess people. Choose from among you. It said. We're free to assess people.

To say. Well I think. So and so. I had never thought of. This person before. But actually. Now you come to think of it. Here's somebody that. Is reliable. And capable. And all of those things.

That we were thinking about. Freedom to assess people. A call for judgment. And assessment. I know it's. People have got this idea. That you don't judge anybody.

Or you don't condemn people. But we do assess people. Assessing is a right. Christian thing to do. A freedom to recognize. The gifts and abilities. Of sisters.

So here's a. Here's a realm. In which sisters. Can be recognized. As playing. A key role. In the church. We.

[ 53 : 08 ] There's a very strong statement. About eldership. And the authoritative. Headship in the church. But we ought also to say. That there's. Many many ways.

In which women. Can do things. That men can't do. Can see things. That men can't see. And say things. That men can't say. And that ought to be recognized. Rightly say. Things that men can't say.

And that. It's not. An authority thing. It's a serving thing. So there's a freedom. To recognize. The gifts and abilities. Of the sisters. I commend. To you.

Says Paul. Phoebe. A servant. Of the church. In Kentria. Maybe she'd. Delivered the letter. A freedom. To organize.

A structure. That fits. With the principles. I don't think. The Bible. Gives us. A blueprint. For the structure. So for example. In the church. Formerly known as.

[ 54 : 02 ] Haywood's Heath Evangelical Free Church. They. I don't know. But they still do it. But they used to say. Every leader. Of something. Is assessed. As a deacon. So the play group leader.

The Sunday school teacher. The treasurer. The person who. Looks after. The social concerns. Within the congregation. We apply. The idea. Of deacon. To all of them.

And check all of them. Against that grid. Of what sort of people. They should be. But they don't. In that church. To the best of my knowledge. They don't meet together. As a group. They just.

Have individual. Responsibilities. Well. They're free to do that. Should they wish to do so. The way we do it. Is that the deacons. Meet together. With the elders.

And function as trustees. For the purposes. Of charity law. And I think we're free. To do that. So. Quick. Scan through. The New Testament material.

[ 54 : 57 ] It would be great. Wouldn't it. If in a few months time. We could get to the point. Where God is pleased. And where the people. Are pleased. And where rough places.

Have been made smooth. And the word of God. Spread. Amen. We're going to sing together.

Number 810.