

# Faithfulness Of Deacons

By John W. Gillmore

## Introduction

In the fall of 1985 the Rodgers Baptist Church, Garland, Texas, voted to set aside three men to be ordained as Deacons. To better prepare these men as Deacons, the Pastor, Bro. Charles Thomas, began to teach them and their wives the duties and responsibilities associated with that office. During these training sessions, Bro. Thomas requested that I prepare a series of studies on “**The Faithfulness of Deacons.**” After much prayer, study and meditation, the studies were presented to the three men and their wives. Only notes were used in making the presentations. Later, Bro. Thomas asked that the studies be written so they could be printed.

The foremost thought and intent in preparing these studies has been to honor and glorify our Lord and Savior. Second, it has been to edify and strengthen Deacons and their wives, His saints and His servants. I believe that was the underlying purpose of my Pastor when requesting these studies be made, that Deacons, “men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” might increase their faithfulness. When our faithfulness is increased, God will be honored and glorified and His church will be edified.

It is realized that to fulfill all phases of faithfulness discussed will be most difficult. I trust that the impression has not been left that I comply with all phases. I do not. My family, Pastor and the Lord knows that I fall far short. But, these are “goals” for us as Deacons to strive for and with God’s grace to attain.

These studies are not exhaustive and do not enter into the qualifications of a Deacon, or the process of selection and ordination, as established in the Books of Acts and 1 Timothy. These studies only involve the “Faithfulness of Deacons.” Since a Deacon is ordained for life, their “faithfulness,” implies a long-continued and steadfast fidelity to God, the church, the Pastor, their family, and the “call” as a Deacon.

It must be remembered that as a Christian, someone, somewhere, is watching every action, listening to every word, observing, testing, to determine if we are living the Christian life we profess. The Deacon is no exception, and if anything, the scrutiny is intensified. Next to the Pastor, the Deacon is probably the most “observed” person in the church. Thus, it behooves the Deacon to always be aware of this, and be mindful that the All-Seeing-Eye of God is watching. No Christian, especially a Deacon, and more so a Pastor, should do anything which would dishonor their position and bring dishonor upon the Lord and His church.

John W. Gillmore  
Ordained a Deacon  
At Central Baptist Church  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
November 11, 1962

## Faithfulness Of Deacons

### TO GOD

The Faithfulness of a Deacon to God is a very personal relationship. It is strictly between the individual and his God. It is of very low visibility, that is, no one knows how faithful we are to God. Of course, the matter of church attendance and church related work can be seen and witnessed by others, but this does not reveal the prayer life of the man, his Bible study habits, his meditation upon the things of the Lord, etc. These are personal relationships between the Deacon and his Lord. A Deacon’s effective service comes as a result of his private walk with God.

### REVERENCE

Perhaps greater than any other one thing, reverence

is the key to our Faithfulness. If the Lord is not revered — is not honored as Lord and Savior, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords — then how can we as Deacons ever expect to be “a good and faithful servant?” He must be loved for His Majesty, as the true and living God, the Creator of all things.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

The word “fear” as used in these and other scriptures is translated from the Hebrew word “*yirah*” and does not mean to be “afraid of,” but to “reverence” to “honor.”

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever” (1 Tim. 1:17).

“To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 25).

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mt. 22:37).

We must reverence Him as the sinless and perfect Trinity — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit — the Three-in-One, yet distinct and equal in all respects. An all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present God which is Holy, Holy, Holy! How can we as sinful and defiled men even mention faithfulness, if we fail to recognize these facts!

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. 4:8).

“In the year that King Uzziah died and I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:1-3).

These seraphims, special created beings, ever in the presence of God, serving Him, took two wings and hid their face, denoting reverence (the face covered in the divine presence); two wings to cover the feet, denoting humility (unworthiness); while the other two wings were used to fly, denoting obedience (swiftly flying to do God’s will).

“It should be noticed how this worship by the four living beings, representative of creation, expresses profound and adoring reverence; confessing with awe and adoration the greatness of God and the perfection of His character. They worship Him as the Almighty Lord God, and the Holy One, the perfect and the eternal One. Such indeed is the witness of creation of the Creator” (The American Commentary on the New Testament, Vol. VII, p. 81-82).

If these seraphims, created to proclaim the adoration of God, and to praise Him, show this much reverence to the Lord God, how can we as mortal man show anything less. We may not be able to understand or to comprehend His Holiness; but we should always be aware that God is Holy!

Can we ever understand the grace that was shown at Calvary? Can we understand the love of Christ? We can understand it enough to always be thankful for His cleansing power, which washes us free from sin ... not only the initial cleansing, but the continual daily cleansing.

Yes, we serve a Holy God and we need to show the utmost reverence to Him. yet, we see and hear men, who profess to be born again believers, take the Lord’s name in vain and show total disregard to His Holiness.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Ex. 20:7).

“And the son of an Israelitish woman whose father was an Egyptian ... blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed ... And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 24:10-16).

I trust that we have never been guilty of this sin. There are people who think nothing of taking God’s name in vain. It has become a habit, and those who do this may not be aware of what they say. It is doubtful if they know of God’s command and the severity of breaking

## READ

### THE BAPTIST CHALLENGE

[www.centralbaptistchurch.org](http://www.centralbaptistchurch.org)

**M. L. Moser, Editor**

**Pastor Emeritus  
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH**

**15601 Taylor Loop Rd.**

**Little Rock, AR 72223**

**Email: [mlmoser1@juno.com](mailto:mlmoser1@juno.com)**

that command. However, the Scriptures say “the Lord’s name.” We often hear the Lord’s name used in vain by people who are expressing their thoughts on the most trivial subjects. Both genders are guilty! Is this showing respect to our God? Is this giving Him honor? Does this reverence and exhibit our love toward Him? Have we no more love than this for the One who gave His Only begotten Son and for the Son who suffered upon the tree for us?

Often we give too little respect and reverence to the Lord, ever believing that we have a forgiving God, which is true. But we must remember that our sins will find us out, much to our dismay and regret. I am reminded of Moses and the many blessings God worked with him, and the testimony the Lord had of him. Yet, he disobeyed the Lord during the wilderness wanderings when the children of Israel were without water, and they chided with him and Aaron. God’s judgment fell upon Moses when he failed to exhibit the reverence the Lord deserved and commanded.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water” (Num. 20:7-8).

“And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts, also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

We need to ask the Lord to deal with us in His tender mercy, in love, but never in justice. If we receive justice, we will all be bound for the devil’s hell. We have all been disobedient children and deserve death, but seek forgiveness. In our human pride, we often begin to believe that we are “pretty good” sort of people; that we may not be as “bad” as the Scriptures say. I am just a notch above the ordinary — just look what I have done for the Lord. I deserve a special place (Gal. 6:3). This shows little or no reverence to God. Christ had a great testimony of John the Baptist, yet, John didn’t claim to be worthy of any great thing.

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist” (Mt. 11:11).

“And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose” (Mk. 1:7).

Here was a man, John, ordained and trained by God

to be the forerunner of the Messiah. The man who prepared the material for Christ to build His church, yet did not even consider himself worthy to untie the shoes of his Lord and Savior. This is humility. It shows the greatest respect, reverence, and honor. A man who had the greatest testimony from Christ — born of women there is none greater — When we begin to recognize the greatness, the holiness of God, as John did, then we can proclaim the same — “I’m not worthy to untie His shoes.” I do not believe that our finite minds can comprehend the real holiness of God. Nor are we capable of fathoming the glory of God.

We must never forget and always be mindful that it is this God with His unlimited mercy, His never-ending love, and His marvelous grace, which offers salvation to fallen and depraved man. It was God the Father who gave His only begotten Son, it was God the Son who gave His life as a sacrifice, it is God the Holy Spirit that convicts sinful man. When this is recognized and believed — then we will worship and reverence Him. We must ever love Him and be thankful to Him. It is He in His holy and infinite wisdom who makes salvation possible, not any works of righteousness which we “think” we have done, but only our Lord and our Savior (Tit. 3:5). It is He that keeps us. It is He that provides cleansing power. We must love and thank Him! We must praise Him! We must praise Him in prayer!

Yes, our reverence of God is the key to our faithfulness. To fail here, should disqualify a man for service as a Deacon in the Lord’s church.

## PRAISE

“Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee” (Psa. 67:3).

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20).

“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:18).

All praise and all glory is due Him, not to man and certainly not to self. How often we are prone to give self the credit for the good things of life which He has provided and given us. Not only are we to praise Him for the “Big Things,” but we must also praise Him for those “Little Things” which we often take for granted. As the above Scriptures say “give thanks always for all things,” and “in everything.” Even those things which we consider “bad” we should still give God the praise (Jas. 1:2). Ever remember that He is in control of “all things” and as His children we should be ever mindful that our

Lord and Savior will receive glory from them. There will be times when we will not understand, but we must remember this is the “will of God in Christ Jesus” for us.

We must praise Him in song, speech, and action. Our very life should praise Him in the service that is rendered for Christ. In Psalm 100 note the commands concerning praise. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (Vs. 1); “come before His presence with singing” (Vs. 2); “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise, be thankful unto him and bless his name” (Vs. 4). We should ever be thankful unto the Lord, both in songs of praise, and in prayers of thanksgiving. How often do we tell the Lord that we love Him, honor Him, and that we are truly thankful for His blessings?

## SALVATION

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Heb. 4:14).

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)” (Heb. 10:23).

As a child of God, we must remain true to our salvation. This is not to imply that we can lose our salvation. If it depended upon us keeping, we would have lost it almost immediately after we were saved. But thanks and glory to Jesus Christ, He keeps us because He is our salvation. In being faithful to our Savior, we must not be a slacker in things pertaining to the Lord’s work. We are not to “backslide” and engage in worldly things. The Word teaches that we can so sin as to get out of fellowship with the Lord and by so doing, lose the joy of our salvation, but not our salvation. When a person is in this state, it assuredly must be a miserable position; being out of the will of God and out of fellowship. There are cases like this in the Bible. David and Bathsheba are examples. After David had sinned and Nathan the prophet had confronted him with his sin, there was deep remorse in David’s heart. How long this continued, the Scriptures do not say. In Psalm 51:12-17 where David makes his prayer to the Almighty God, it is very clear that fellowship had been broken and joy lost. “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” This is what being “faithful to our salvation” is all about — to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord, to always attempt to stay in the center of His will, to resist sin and live as pure a life as is humanly possible. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 Jn. 1:8). As long as we are in this fleshly

body, we are going to sin. But we should seek forgiveness of those sins, else we find ourselves out of fellowship and lose the “joy of thy salvation.”

Another case in the New Testament is the denial of the Lord by Peter in Matthew 26:75. The Scripture says that “he went out and wept bitterly.” Even though there was rejoicing in Peter’s heart at the resurrection of Jesus, and during the days which followed when the resurrected Christ fellowshiped with the church and the apostles, the “full joy of thy salvation” probably did not return to Peter until he confirmed his love for Jesus (Jn. 21:15-17). It is evident that both these men were very sorrowful for their sins, and that true genuine repentance and confession to God seeking forgiveness, restored their joy. They both went forward and became mighty men of God, accomplishing great things for Him. If we should so fall, we should let these incidents be examples to us. We never know when Satan may desire us as he did Peter and the Lord might grant his wish (Lk. 22:31). As Deacons we should live such godly lives that Satan will desire us, but our prayers should be that the Lord will “build a hedge” about us as He did Job (Job 1:10). Then, Satan cannot touch us. But, if it is the Lord’s will for Satan “to sift” us, we must pray for the grace of God and His sustaining mercy and strength!

There should be no doubting our salvation. It is as eternal as the Lord. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (Rev. 1:8). He is the “I AM,” ever in the “present tense.” Man lives in “time.” It is hard for us to conceive in terms of something without measure. How is something explained that never ends? This is eternity!

Yes, to doubt our salvation, is to doubt the One who keeps us — the Lord Jesus Christ. If we doubt, in a sense we’re saying that He is incapable of keeping that which is His. If He can’t keep us, is He capable of saving us? “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (Jn. 10:28). Note that “man” is in italics, indicating it was added by the translators. So, “any” would include man, Satan, angels, etc., as described by Paul in Romans 8:35-39.

Faith in God knows no limitation. Our faithfulness to salvation is not a question of losing our salvation, but a matter of being out of fellowship with the Lord. As stated in Hebrews 10:23, we are to “hold fast” our salvation — we will persevere because “He is faithful that promised.”

## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES — THE BIBLE STUDY

Every Christian should have a knowledge of the Word of God. As a Deacon, this is especially true. We should know the Scriptures and be always ready with a “thus saith the Lord.” Reading the Bible is good, and a certain amount of just “plain reading” is desirable. But then comes a time of study, of meditation, when we allow the Holy Spirit to guide and direct our thoughts. Divine guidance should be sought before we begin our reading or studying. If possible a definite time should be set aside, preferably, when there will be no interruptions. A quiet time is needed when there is time to run references and look up associated scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15; Jn. 5:39).

We can learn much from good books and commentaries, but be very, very careful. Some are excellent and some are just so much “trash.” If we can profit from what other men have learned, where the Holy Spirit has enlightened great men of God, then I believe the Lord would have us do so. Paul says “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13). If Paul considered the books important, then we should certainly be interested in them. The parchments are the books of the Bible, in this case, the Old Testament.

A Deacon, to be fully utilized by the Lord and to fulfill the obligations which the office requires, must spend time studying God’s Word. It is our offensive weapon, it is our sword! If we are unskilled in its use our adversary the devil (1 Pet. 5:8) will have an advantage. James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9 says to resist the devil. But to resist, we must know the Scriptures. When the tempter came to Jesus, our Lord defeated him with the Written Word (Mt. 4:1-11). There is “power” in the Word (Heb. 4:12; Jer. 23:29).

### **TRUTH — Purity of Word)**

The Bible is the Word of God. It does not *contain* the Word, but it *is* the Word. Other books may contain the Word of God, but are not the Word. The Bible *is* the Holy inspired Word of God. That means that it was “breathed upon” by the Holy Spirit of God who verbally inspired and directed the writers. These writings were and are, without error or contradiction, infallible. Down through the ages, God has provided that His Holy, inspired Word, be preserved by and for His saints. Thousands, yea millions have been martyred for no other reason than their contention for the purity of the Scriptures and for their preservation.

Since Satan has done everything in his power to destroy God’s Word and found it impossible, he is seeking

to pollute the Word This is being done through modernistic translations. Translations which pervert and distort the Word to please the world and the “itching ears” of modernistic men are to be rejected by Bible-believing God-fearing saints (Dt. 4:2; Rev. 22:19; Prov. 30:6).

If the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, then on what do we base our faith? If it only contains God’s Word, then which part is God’s and which part is man’s? It is either an all or none situation! God’s Word *is* holy, sacred — and we should treat it as such, to guard it against all impurities, and to maintain in all its purity. We should have a love for the Written Word (Psa. 119:97, 140).

Today, with new churches and cults springing up, we must know the Scriptures to discern their true identity. What was their origin? Who was their founder? What do they teach concerning the church and salvation? Are they true to the teachings of the Bible? They claim to be. But, God says we “should earnestly contend for the faith” (body of truth) (Jude 3-4). It behooves Deacons to know Bible doctrine concerning the New Testament church. Are our Sister Baptist churches remaining true to the Word? I hear reports that some are departing from the faith! Then, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we must remain true to the Word — to hold it up in all its purity — as the true Word of God — the verbally inspired, inerrant Word. Deacons should be “faithful to the Written Word” and be leaders along with those faithful preachers who contend for the truth.

### **PRAYER**

Prayer is a privilege! It is an honor to be able to pray to the true and living God! But how often do we pray? How much do we pray? We sing of “Sweet Hour of Prayer” — yet, do we ever pray for an hour (Eph. 6:18)?

Prayer is our communication with our Lord and Savior — it’s our line of power. How can we possibly know and follow the will of God without sufficient prayer? Yet this is probably one of a Deacon’s weakest areas, his prayer life. Not only do Deacons need to be able to lead in public prayer and to pray with his family, but his private prayer life should be of utmost importance to him. A time when he can be alone, just he and his Lord, where a sweet fellowship and communion can be established (Mt. 6:5-7; 23:14). The Bible reveals that Christ prayed often. He spent many hours in prayer, sometimes praying for long periods of time, such as all night. We can learn much from the prayers of Christ. For example:

**Morning Devotions** (Mk. 1:35). We need to begin our day with a prayer, ever thankful for the Lord's watch care over us during the night, and to seek His protection and guidance throughout the coming day. When we think of the alternatives, it should make us more thankful. What if we were unable to get up, as in the case of many who are bedfast, crippled, or ill. The advantages, the freedoms we enjoy in this great land should make us thankful, not to mention the greatest gift of all — the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning grace. I am afraid that many of us fail in this early morning prayer.

**Evening Prayer** (Mk. 6:46-47). At the close of a busy day, there should be a time when we can give thanks to our God for that day. Whether our day has been good or bad, we're still in His care and He should be honored and thanks given.

**Solitary Communion** (Lk. 5:15-16). There is a time for public prayer, and Deacons should not hesitate to lead in such. However, there are times when we need to be alone with the Lord. If this was important for Jesus, the only Begotten of the Father, that unique Person who was Man, yet God, then it is doubly important for us. There were times when Jesus spent all night in prayer (Lk. 6:12). Only the close disciples were near Him (Lk. 9:18). Just before His betrayal by Judas, He prayed alone in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:41-42).

There may be times when we pray earnestly in all sincerity, and it seems our prayers never rise above the ceiling. For no apparent reason, it seems that all communication with the Lord has vanished. This is a time when we should do some real "soul searching," seeking out if we have "gotten out of fellowship," if we have transgressed God's commands. A time to beg forgiveness and beseech the Lord for a closer relationship. Could this broken fellowship be due to some transgression we have committed (Mt. 26:41)? Or, perhaps this is the result of some event or events over which we have no control, but our grieving in the Spirit has placed us in this saddened condition before the Lord. It is a most helpless feeling.

There are conditions which are essential, if we expect our prayers to receive favor with the Lord. Some of these are:

1. Right with God (Isa. 59:2; Psa. 66:18).
2. Observance of God's laws (Prov. 38:9).
3. Right with our spouse (1 Pet. 3:7).
4. Right with our brothers (Mk. 11:24-26; Jas. 5:9).
5. In conformance to God's will (1 Jn. 5:14-15).
6. Hearts of brethren in one accord (group prayer) (Mt. 18:19; Acts 1:14; 21:5).

Prayer need not be elaborate with flowery words

and phrases. Our God understands simple language. When the Lord taught His apostles to pray (Luke 11:1-13), He didn't use impressive words, just simple words, with praise and thanks to God. In John 17, Christ prayed plain simple dedicated words. Our prayers should be likewise; prayers of praise, of thanksgiving, of repentance, seeking forgiveness for those areas where we have sinned and failed in our service.

We need to carry our Brothers and Sisters before the Throne of Grace, to pray for the lost, and to seek Divine guidance for our own life (Jas. 5:16). Our problems should be carried before the Lord when they are small, before they grow "out of hand" and we can't handle them. The problems of our fellow Christians should also be made a matter of prayer. The Lord can resolve problems when they are laid before Him. Our God is interested in His children and their problems. When we're on our knees pouring out our hearts to Him, He hears and answers (Jer. 33:3). But, by the same token, our prayer should not be a "give-me" type.

There is a time when we need to "wait and listen" to what the Lord may have for us. In this day and age, God does not speak to us in an audible voice, but the Holy Spirit impresses upon our hearts the things He wants us to know. He will never lead us contrary to those things in His Word. As Deacons, we must know the written Word to discern the Lord's will and leadership in our lives and service to Him.

When we examine the prayer life — the length of prayers and the frequency of prayer — of some of the false religions, we as children of *the true and living God*, should be ashamed! The short time that I was in Saudi Arabia, I witnessed the worship of the Moslems to their god Alah. Five times a day, they pray, from early in the morning until late at night. Their prayers lasted 15 to 20 minutes each time. That is better than an hour of prayer each day. When the time came to pray, the prayer call was sent out — business closed, stores were locked and everything came to a standstill, so to speak. Those near a mosque went there to pray. Those traveling were excused; however, I have seen cars stop and the people get out, spread their prayer pads, face Mecca, kneel and bow with their faces to the ground in prayer. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we should be ashamed! We should humble ourselves before the Lord and seek forgiveness. Let's learn to pray and to become "prayer warriors" of the Lord!

**THE FAITH!** — This discussion concerns what the Bible teaches about the doctrines and the purity of the Word.

## DOCTRINES

In this day and age, when we see a turning away from the things of God and a turning to those things which are pleasing to the eye, to the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, we need to contend for the faith. When “cults” of every description are springing up on all sides, and with false teaching dominating the scene, it is imperative that “men of God” stand up for the doctrines laid down in the Bible. Such doctrines as the Sovereignty of God; the Deity of Christ; Salvation by Grace; Baptism by immersion of a born-again believer, by the proper authority and for the right purpose; observance of the Lord’s Supper in and by the local New Testament church and the other Articles of Faith which we as Baptists believe the Bible to teach. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we cannot contend for the Faith unless we know the doctrines and what the Bible teaches about them — doctrines of God and not of men (Jude 3).

There are many churches, Baptist churches, where little or no doctrine is studied, taught or preached. Babies and children grow and develop according to the food they eat. Medical science tells us that what a mother eats, her life style during pregnancy and while nursing a baby can have a direct influence upon the growth and development of that child. What type of nourishment is being provided our new born babes in Christ? What kind of food are we giving them so that they will grow into strong mature Christians? To develop a strong body, there must be exercise. Are we providing the proper training which will result in strong, healthy followers of Christ capable of “contending for the faith?”

I am afraid that we are raising a generation of Baptists which are not receiving proper nourishment. A generation which has little knowledge of the teachings of the Scriptures, even in the basic fundamentals, much less the deeper doctrines (Heb. 5:12-14; 6:1-3). A generation is being raised which can be led astray by every false teacher and by every false doctrine that the devil sends their way. I am not saying all are like that, but it certainly seems to be happening in many cases. There are churches which claim that people are being “saved and added to the church,” yet weekly attendance remains about the same. What is happening to these “new converts?” It appears that they soon drop out of church and go on their merry way, perhaps claiming some emotional “experience” as salvation. When this occurs, the church is failing to carry out the Great Commission. Many times there is little or no follow-up type work, no training, no teaching, no keeping them in the Lord’s house where they might grow in grace and develop into mature servants

ready to serve the Lord. It takes years to grow a mighty tree that will stand and weather the storms of time (Psa. 1:3; 92:12-14). On the other hand, mushrooms (toad stools) can spring up over night. They are very fragile, unstable and easily uprooted. They can disappear just as quickly as they spring up. We need to plant and grow mighty “trees” for the Lord.

Certainly, it cannot be denied that the above happens in many cases. As Deacons, it is our duty, it is our obligation to see that such does not occur. It is our duty to love and accept these “little ones” and to teach and instruct them in God’s Word. I do not believe that the Lord wants us just to gain numbers on the church roll, but, to place names in the Lamb’s Book of Life (humanly speaking). We can only do that if we know the Scriptures and the doctrines they contain.

## WRITTEN WORD (True to Commands)

By qualifications, Deacons are to be faithful men, full of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we should and must remain true and faithful to the Written Word — true to the commands of God’s holy Word. We must not be swayed with every new doctrine or teaching which may come our way, or by every new ritual which becomes popular (Mk. 7:7-9; Tit. 1:9). Deacons are to be men who are energetic, aggressive and courageous to the Spirit of God. This does not mean that we are to be overbearing, but are to stand firm in our beliefs, to be persuasive in our discussions, gentle and patient in our witnessing. Always remaining true to what the Lord says, and not to what men think or teach.

## TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Let us not forget that the Scriptures teach the tithes and offerings are the Lord’s. In being faithful to Him, we must consider this all important item. Deacons should be especially mindful of this. A man does not qualify for the office of Deacon if he will not tithe. Although this is strictly between the individual and his Lord, it should not be overlooked when a man is being considered for this “special office.”

Sometimes we consider the tithe as being a small thing, as far as the Lord is concerned. After all, doesn’t He own the cattle on a thousand hills? Doesn’t He own all things, all the valuables in this world and this whole universe? Yes, our very life and soul belongs to Him. And as the world reasons, my tithe is so small that He’ll

never miss it. Besides, I do really need it this month, and besides the church and the Pastor don't need it. It is not a matter of whether the Lord, or the Lord's church or the Pastor (it is not the Pastor's anyway) needs it, the tithe belongs unto the Lord (Lev. 27:30-32). If we cannot be faithful in small things, then how can the Lord expect us to be true and faithful in bigger things (humanly speaking)? Or, how can we expect the Lord to give us opportunity to accomplish greater things for Him, if we are unfaithful here.

We would never think of robbing a friend or another person, yet we think nothing of using the tithe and offerings which belong to the Lord, for our own enjoyment. I believe that if we are faithful in this area, God will and does keep His promise to bless. But, how often we look for financial blessings, when God never mentioned the kind of blessings He would provide. We are tuned to the world in this realm, and only think of the material side of things. Do we ever think of the physical side? How much value can be placed upon good health? Yet, God is the only One who can give this blessing.

Then, there is the mental side. Not only should we be thankful for a good strong healthy body, but a strong healthy mind is equally important. It is really sad to find a person developed in body, but mentally deficient. Our heart goes out to such a person. Yet, this is another of the Lord's blessings which is so often overlooked and taken for granted. Sometimes the Lord's blessings are so many and our store houses so full, there's no room for more. yet, we fail to recognize His blessings (Mal. 3:8-10; 2 Cor. 9:7-8; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Yes, the tithe belongs to the Lord. We should ever be thankful for the privilege of giving unto Him,. He has given so much to us!

## **FAITHFULNESS OF DEACONS TO THE CHURCH**

The "Faithfulness" of the Deacon to the church and his role in it has a very high visibility. As Deacons, we must be aware of this. More important, we must remember that we are not to do things for the "show and glory" of man, but for the "honor and glory of our Lord and Savior." It is He that we are to please and not man.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Some people take church membership and church attendance very lightly. As Deacons, we should consider it of high priority. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25). We should also love the church. We should be in every church service and at every special called meeting, even business meeting night (Heb. 10:25). Attendance at revivals is very important, and we should make every effort to attend all services. Remember, as Deacons and perhaps as teachers of a class, that students are watching and looking for our presence. This is especially true of the lost people and the "young Christians." What kind of an example are we establishing for them? Attendance is important in the service to be rendered to the Lord and His church and to the role we perform toward the welfare of the membership.

Church attendance should be considered a privilege and a joy. If it isn't, then why? It should bring gladness and rejoicing to our hearts to hear the Word proclaimed and to fellowship with the saints of God (Psa. 122:1). If joy and gladness is received from fellowshiping with the "world," then perhaps it's time we examine our relationship with the Lord.

## **STABILITY**

To be an effective servant and leader within the church. Deacons must be stable; know what we believe, why we believe it, and stand firm on that belief (Eph. 6:11, 14; Phil. 4:1). Deacons should not permit themselves to be turned about and led astray by every false doctrine and every false teacher (1 Jn. 4:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:1). Deacons are to be straight speakers, i.e., not speak conflicting doctrines (1 Cor. 14:33). Deacons must be men who believe these truths and remain firm in their convictions. We are the "pillars" of the church! The purpose of a pillar (column) is to support (carry) a heavy load. But, to support a heavy load, a pillar must have a good foundation and must be strong internally. Deacons must be grounded on "The Solid Rock" which is Christ. Men who are strong in the Spirit with a clear, sound testimony of salvation, who can expound upon the Word of God, and who can support and strengthen the weaker members of the church (Rom. 14:1).

Deacons should be strong willed and tough skinned. This is not saying we are to be head strong and unwilling to listen to reason, but men who are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. At the same time, we need to be men who can stand pressure, ridicule, and criticism.

We must be able to stand against opposition and attacks from Satan and his crowd. As Deacons, we should not be shaken as the reed with every gust of wind, but stand firm during storms, like mighty oaks rooted in the Solid Rock (Mt. 11:7). We must remain stable and faithful to the Lord and His teachings.

## **SERVICE**

Service unto the Lord and His church is an important role in a Deacon's life. The purpose of the Original Seven was to serve "to serve tables" (Acts 6:2). "A servant" is the very meaning of our title.

There are many places the Deacon can render service to the church. Let's examine only four: Leadership, Teaching, Witnessing and the Lord's Supper.

## **LEADERSHIP**

The very nature of the office of Deacon is leadership (Acts 6:3). This is not a type of leadership to lord or to rule over the church and Pastor, but rather that of a humble and obedient servant. It is not a position to become overbearing or a dictator, but one to serve the church and assist the Pastor. Deacons should be examples for the church to follow, whether it relates to spiritual matters such as teaching, witnessing, soul-winning, special Bible study courses, church business meetings or other church related activities. This is not suggesting that Deacons are to rule the church. This is not our job. Our Lord and Savior is the Chief Shepherd and the Pastor of the church is the Under Shepherd of the flock.

It is not the Pastor's position to "lord over" the church, but to lead and direct the church, not drive them. This is Peter's direction as stated in 1 Peter 5:3. Peter says for Pastors to be examples, to work in all humbleness. It is a small wonder that the Holy Spirit selected Peter to write these words. In his early ministry, Peter was proud, haughty, ready to act without all the facts, but always with good intentions. During the transfiguration of Christ on the Mount, Peter suggested that three tabernacles be built, one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elias. God the Father answered from heaven (Mt. 17:1-5). This must have made Peter feel very humble. Another time was during the period of Christ's crucifixion (Mt. 26:35). Peter was very proud and boastful — "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." He was fearless in his statement, even going so far as to cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Yet, when he denied the Lord the third time,

the cock crowed and The Master looked at him, he realized what he had done, and went out and wept bitterly. He humbled himself, he repented and became a great servant of God. He gave him the privilege of preaching that great sermon on the Day of Pentecost and of carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. Peter was a changed man. He knew what it was to lead. We, as Deacons, should be leaders within the flock and examples before the Lord and the church. However, this is an area in which we must be extremely careful. When we think we are humble, we probably aren't. Leadership is like that — when we think we are one — we may just be an overbearing driver. It is something that we do, but only others can evaluate (Gal. 6:3).

## **TEACHING**

The Great Commission as it is commonly called, tells us to "make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them." Teaching a new convert involves instruction, training, edifying them in the Scriptures and doctrines. As discussed earlier, this is an area where it appears the true church is falling down. People make a profession of faith, are baptized, learn one doctrine "once saved always saved," (eternal security of the believer) and then drop out of church. Why? Has the church neglected them? Have we failed in teaching them? If they were truly saved would they not want to continue in worship of the Lord and in serving Him? Perhaps, but let's remember that Satan is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). He knows that he has lost their soul, but if he can cause them to lose their testimony, then they will not only drop out of regular church attendance, but they may be a stumbling block which will prevent a friend or loved one from being saved.

It is our job to teach our new born Brothers and Sisters in Christ. It is true the Pastor does teach from the pulpit, but he must also preach the gospel. He cannot teach everyone. The commandment was given to the church, not just to the Apostles. We are part of that church, so the commission becomes binding upon us. We cannot teach unless we read and study the Scriptures, know and understand the doctrines so that we may explain not only what we believe the Bible to teach, but why (Heb. 5:12-14; 6:1-3). These young ones must be loved and encouraged. They must have a desire to learn and to grow. That is part of the job of teaching. I believe that we as Baptists are failing to teach our converts. Many of the members of the other denominations will testify they were once members of a Baptist church. Why did they leave? Had they been "grounded in the faith" would

they have left? Whose fault is that? Shall we blame the Pastor? Partially, because he is to lead the sheep. But, he is not entirely to blame. If the Pastor is failing to do his job, why is he kept? So, it comes right back to us, as members and especially as Deacons, we need to be teachers as well. We must take the new Christians under our arm and teach and train them so that they might grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

## WITNESSING

Witnessing is much more involved than telling others the plan of salvation. Certainly, we as Deacons should be able to present the gospel and lead another to the saving grace of our Lord and Savior (Mk. 16:15, 20; Acts 1:8). Telling of our own conversion should be so clear, simple and filled with the Plan of Salvation, that others can be saved. The lives we live should be “a living testimony” that we are Christians. This is witnessing. Telling others of answered prayers, of blessings which God has bestowed upon us, and of His love, mercy and grace, are all forms of witnessing (Isa. 43:10; Mk. 2:12; Acts 3:8-9).

Simply inviting people to church, distributing tracts, making people welcome, inviting newcomers to socials and into our homes are other forms of witnessing (Psa. 122:1). Someone may ask how can these items be witnessing? It is reaching out, extending our friendship, our love to them. A person’s confidence must be gained before we can become an effective witness for Christ. Deacons are to be men in whom people can trust and have confidence. Once this relationship is established, we can then witness of the saving grace of our Lord.

Before we can be an effective witness for Christ, there must be a love for the Lord, a love for people, and a love for lost souls. We must have a love for His church. We must exhibit love and compassion, “Love never faileth” (1 Cor. 13:8, 13).

## THE LORD’S SUPPER

The observance of the Lord’s Supper is a solemn occasion in the church. It is the time we reflect upon the broken body and shed blood of our Lord and Savior (Mt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:20-20). As he hung upon the cross, despised and rejected of men, He suffered and died for our sins. The sinless perfect sacrifice — the only sacrifice that was acceptable to God the Father. Not only did He endure physical suffering, but also the mental anguish

He underwent as the Father forsook Him. The Lord’s Supper is a time when we meditate upon these things, to be ever so humble and thankful for the great mercy and grace that has been bestowed upon us. A very, very solemn occasion indeed.

Deacons have an important place in observance of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 6:2). Deacons prepare the table — the unleavened bread representing the sinless and broken body — the unfermented fruit of the vine (grape juice) representing the shed blood. Deacons serve the table — passing the bread and juice to the church members and the Pastor. The plates, glasses and linens are to be washed and cleaned, put away for the next time. Those ingredients left over from the Supper are to be disposed of in a proper manner. This may vary from church to church. The remaining bread and juice may be burned, buried or disposed of otherwise. They certainly are not to be used as normal food. They are not to be desecrated.

Each member of the local church should make every effort to attend the observance of the Lord’s Supper. We should encourage them to do so.

## WELFARE OF MEMBERSHIP

As we study the Scriptures, we learn that this is the very reason for Deacons (Acts 6:1-8). The Apostles (Pastors) were to give themselves “to prayer and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). The welfare of the members is an awesome job with great responsibilities. Deacons must remain faithful in fulfilling these obligations, regardless of the size and complexity of the task. We must remain humble. We must control our tongues to avoid starting gossip or hurting others, because we will often be dealing with Brothers and Sisters in a very personal and serious nature. Extreme tact and diplomacy will be required. Our patience will be tried. Whatever the task, we must remain faithful to our Lord and the office to which we have been selected, ever seeking His will and wisdom and the Spirit’s leadership and guidance. We must seek and use the fruits of the Spirit as taught in Galatians 5:22-26. Welfare of the membership can cover numerous items. We will study only seven.

## HARMONY

Perhaps one of the greatest tasks a Deacon can perform and one of the things which will be most pleasing to the Lord, outside of leading the lost to Christ, is to promote and maintain harmony among the church

members. In Acts 6:1, there was a “murmuring” among the membership. Down through the years, we find that people often murmured (Num. 11:1; 14:26-30). This results in God’s displeasure and often in chastisement.

We need to be aware of murmurers (Jude 16-19) — “walk after their own ungodly lusts — having not the Spirit.”

Brothers and Sisters, it is a dangerous thing to disrupt the fellowship of a church, by whatever means or methods used to do so; whether it be intentional or unintentional; whether it be Pastor, Deacon, church member, or simply a visitor. The devil gets no greater satisfaction than using one of God’s children to disrupt, or destroy the fellowship and harmony of the church; causing the trustworthiness of our brothers and sisters to be questioned. You may ask, “How is this done?” (Jas.3:1-12).

Acts 6:7 finds the fellowship among the members of that first Baptist church was restored and once again they were in “one accord.” I do not know how this was accomplished, but the Apostles (Pastors) and the Deacons worked together — worked harmoniously — worked under the leadership of the Spirit — each doing their assigned work without murmuring, without boasting, without jealousy, or complaining. Neither could do the job alone, but together, great things were accomplished for the Lord. There is one thing, which if properly used within a church, promotes and keeps harmony. This one thing is to “love one another.” Over and over again we read this in the Scriptures, so the Holy Spirit must have considered it very important (Jn. 15:9-14; 13:34-35; 1 Thess. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:22).

Love is not hurting, is not unkind, is not jealous, is not strife or hatred. Love is kind and gentle, love is forgiving and forgetting, love is sensitive, love is forbearing, love is of the Lord. “I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34). Love is “*agape*” — that deep, sacrificial giving love — not the cheap lustful love the world knows and adores. True love is active!

Love began with God — the Trinity — John 3:16 was demonstrated by the Chief Shepherd. It must be demonstrated by the Under Shepherd and his wife, the Deacons and their wives before it will be contagious within the church. Love is that one ingredient that holds together, that binds the various members into one body. Based upon the Scriptures, if we practice and promote Christian love toward the Lord and toward each other, there will be harmony within the church and there will not be all the trouble and turmoil we see in many New Testament churches (Col. 3:12-15).

God loves us but hates the sins we commit (Prov. 6:16). In spite of our sins — no matter how bad, God

forgives us (1 Jn. 1:9). Brothers and Sisters in Christ, not only must we have love one for another, but we must have a forgiving spirit — and a forgetting spirit (Mt. 18:21-22). Can our Brother’s transgression against us be as terrible as our sin against a Holy God? Yet He forgives and forgets (Heb. 10:17). Let us do likewise (Mt. 18:23-35).

Gossip is a deadly tool of the devil. Deacons should not be “caught up” in it. Gossip hurts and destroys whereas love is kind, comforting and sensitive. If a “good word” or words of praise cannot be said about someone, then nothing at all should be uttered. Deacons cannot take sides in a dispute because this divides. However, if the dispute is a Biblical or doctrinal matter, Deacons must speak the truth, the Holy Word of God.

## BENEVOLENCE

Because of persecution of the early church, the church had all things common (Acts 4:32), brother helping brother. Distribution was made to those that had need (Acts 4:35). As the number of members grew, this became a burden for the Apostles, thus the Deacons were selected (Acts 6:1-3). Today, when there is a case of need in the church (I do not believe the church is to care for the world’s needy), it is the Deacon’s responsibility, generally along with his wife, to investigate, and if deemed appropriate, make distribution to that case of need. Money may or may not be given, depending upon the individual and circumstances, but food and the necessities of life are provided. Churches may handle the finances in different ways by special offerings, and/or a special fund out of the regular treasury, or perhaps the Deacon may pay for it. This is not to be considered as part of his tithe, but as an offering. In special cases benevolence may be extended outside the church, but these are special occasions. Other times “poundings” are provided by the church, but the Deacons and their wives should be the leaders in this also. A Deacon does this work quietly, in a spirit of humbleness, always mindful and thankful for the Lord’s blessings to him and his family!

## DISCIPLINE

Discipline, whether in the home or in the church is not practiced much any more (1 Cor. 5:1-5). It is a subject we don’t like to discuss, but it is Biblical. Because it is not exercised, look at the condition of our homes, our children, and note the condition of many of our

churches. Churches which are full of worldly people. Yet, God in His infinite mercy and grace blesses. Isn't His love amazing?

Discipline, when properly handled within the church is done for four purposes: Glory of God; Purity of the church; Good of the individual, and a warning to others. We are not going to discuss the various reasons for disciplinary action and the various steps involved, only those areas where the Deacons are involved. Once it is evident that disciplinary action is required, it is generally a Deacon and his wife or perhaps two Deacons who investigate and reports to the Pastor or sometimes the Pastor and his wife. These are unpleasant moments for those doing the investigating. Here is a Brother or Sister in Christ whom Satan has snared — has caused to backslide, who is now out of fellowship with the Lord and the church. Every effort should be made to lead such a one back into fellowship. The Pastor, a Deacon or perhaps a Christian Brother or Sister familiar with the conditions, should make every effort to restore this broken relationship. We should be ever mindful if God had not put a hedge about us, we might be the one that was being disciplined. Never critical, but ever in a spirit of humbleness, yet firm (Mt. 18:15-18). If they can be led back into fellowship, a "life" has been gained (2 Cor. 2:6-9). If they refuse, then there is nothing for the Deacon to do but report the facts to the Pastor and eventually the church for whatever action is deemed necessary.

## RETURNING THE STRAYED SHEEP

I believe this is an area where many churches are failing. But first, we must understand why "the sheep went astray," otherwise if they are returned, they may stray again. I did not say that they would lose their salvation. Only, that they may again wander back into the ways of the world — out of fellowship with the Lord and His church.

First, there is a falling away from Bible teaching and preaching. There is a failure to indoctrinate our people in "the faith." This makes easy prey for the devil and his false teachers, as many do not recognize Scriptural teaching and sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:4-7; 4:1-2).

Second, the atmosphere in many churches is not conducive to the birth of healthy lambs which develop into strong and mature sheep. The food is bad, there is an attitude of indifference, a coldness that chills to the bone. There is a lack of genuine concern, a failure to show love. We are wrapped up with ourselves and our friends. We may be ever so friendly, but it's only skin deep. The straying sheep can easily detect our hypocrisy.

How can we correct this condition? "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1-2). Often a strayed sheep is hurt or lonely and needs someone to lean upon, a helping hand. They need companionship, rebuilding of their ego. Satan and his crowd are eager to help Are we?

The world and sin are enticing, the devil and his demons are powerful, but the Lord is All Power. It's so easy to be caught up in the devil's snare. But the Lord may and does use His saints to bring these wayward ones home, or He may use some catastrophic event. Let us not overlook the workings of the Holy Spirit. If it were not for Him and His convicting power — we could do nothing (Jn. 16:7-11).

The Pastor does not have time to talk, visit, and perhaps counsel them all. The Deacons are — "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." Deacons then by their very position should be "spiritual." They can and should assist the Pastor in restoring those who have been overtaken in a fault, or have just strayed away. (Actually this is the responsibility of the entire church.) This is one of the reasons we as Deacons need to be strong in the faith and have a knowledge of the Bible. Often, a Deacon can "communicate" with a Brother or Sister and be more effective in witnessing to them than the Pastor. Ladies, as a Deacon's wife you may be used of the Lord in many instances.

I like to think of Luke 15:3-7 as applying to saved people. It is also explained as applying to the lost, but a sheep represents a saved person. Let's notice there is rejoicing when the lost sheep is found. When a wayward person is brought back into fellowship — how much rejoicing is there? How many prayers of thanks and rejoicing are sent up to our Heavenly Father? How much love and compassion is shown to this individual? How many lives — lives which should be productive for the Lord are wasted because someone — "we" — failed in our Christian duty. Especially we as Deacons need to listen, to have a sympathetic ear. The Cults are listening, giving time to those who need a shoulder to lean on. Perhaps if we exercised and demonstrated more Christian love and caring, we wouldn't have as many "lost sheep" to find and bring home.

## ENCOURAGEMENT

A babe needs assistance, a hand to hold, to be led and loved. A babe needs feeding more often than an



adult. The same is true of a babe in Christ. They must be lead, inspired and encouraged to read and study the Bible daily. They must be encouraged to regularly engage in prayer and to meditate upon the things of the Lord. New members and visitors need to be made welcome — to be made to feel they are loved, wanted, and needed, and that they are part of the “group,” not alone.

Those who are teaching, especially for the first time, need encouragement, compliments, counseling, and a word of prayer. Those gifted members should be given encouragement to use their talents for the glory of God. Deacons are men selected by the church — we and our wives occupy a unique position in the church — a place of respect and honor — this is logical work for us. Encouragement and compliments from us can mean a lot. Brethren, we can and should assist the Pastor in this task. Not with fan fare, but quietly and sincerely. “But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). In fact, all of us need encouragement, regardless of our age or position (Rom. 15:1-2). The young people certainly need encouragement to live a clean, moral Christian life. The temptations they face are tremendous. Have you encouraged them lately? Do you pray for them regularly?

## **DISCOURAGED AND DESPONDENT**

We cannot remain on the mountain top all the time, there will be valleys, and there will be canyons, deep canyons and boxed-in canyons; the devil will see to that. Those who are discouraged and despondent, often need and seek a shoulder to lean upon. A listening ear and a trusting sincere heart that will hear their problems, and will give them time and prayer. Does it matter what their problems are? Be it family (children, spouse, parents, in-laws, divorce, etc.) work, job, school, conviction of sin, financial difficulties, and on and on and on (Psa. 102:1-7; 142:1-4).

Our churches are full of people who are discouraged, people who may be heart-broken, people who have had their world come crashing down around them. A shattered dream, a despondent soul, a crushed life, who will help? They need someone to turn to — someone that will show an interest, someone that thinks of them, makes them feel loved and needed, someone that will turn to the Scriptures with them, that will pray with and for them. I believe the Pastor will bear witness that there are numerous people in the church who are crying out for help. If we don’t provide it, someone else will. False churches, worldly churches and cults are not the answer,

but they will lend them an ear, a shoulder, and the encouragement people are looking for.

The world will provide the lusts of the eyes and the flesh and the pride of life, but these are the devils snares (1 Jn. 2:16). These are not the solutions. We have the answer, the Word of God and Jesus as Lord and Savior. We should be giving them the good news and encouragement. Obviously, the Pastor and the Associate Pastor cannot listen and encourage them all. The Deacons can fill this gap. We must (both the Deacon and his wife) have the confidence of the church. We are honest, sincere, men and women in whom they can confide and trust. We must not do or say anything that will cause the Flock to lose that trust. Deacons and their wives must retain the confidence and trust of the church if we are to render effective service (Eccl. 4:9-12).

## **MISFORTUNE — DEATH — SICKNESS**

Sometime in our life we are all going to experience the above. It is a comfort to know that Christian friends are there to comfort and to assist if needed. Deacons and their wives should be the examples in the church in comforting and consoling those which have experienced a misfortune. We should extend a helping hand, lend a listening ear and furnish a shoulder to cry on. Words of sympathy with true and sincere actions that the bereaved can feel should be shown. A prayer shared (Jn. 11:33-36). Deacons should help a Brother or Sister by assisting them to bear a burden (Col. 3:12-17; Rom. 12:15).

In times like this — often nothing is needed, but our presence, an arm around the shoulder, a Christian hug. It may not be necessary to say “I care,” and assure them that their Brothers and Sisters are concerned, that we share their grief and that we love them (1 Thess. 5:11, 14; Gal. 6:2).

## **FAITHFULNESS OF DEACONS**

### **TO THE PASTOR**

A harmonious relationship between a Deacon and his Pastor is very important for the well being, harmony and sweet fellowship of a church. This is very evident from the Holy Scriptures — “There arose a murmuring

of the Grecians against the Hebrews” (Acts 6:1). There was trouble in the church. There was jealousy, discord and broken fellowship (Acts 6:2-6). The Apostles acting under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, instructed the church to select seven men for Deacons. After the seven were selected and ordained, they went about doing the work which the Apostles appointed. In verse 7, fellowship had been restored in the church and God’s blessings once again came upon them. What the Apostles could not do without neglecting their duties, i.e., preaching and praying, the Deacons were able to accomplish by working harmoniously with them. Close cooperation, a unity of effort, and faithfulness of the Deacons to perform the business assigned to them by the Church and the Apostles were required.

Where fellowship and closeness exists between a Pastor and Deacons there will be a faithfulness which the church may never be aware. It is of low visibility. This is the manner in which Deacons are to serve — accepting responsibility and performing their duties in a quiet, faithful manner. On the other hand, if there is discord, disagreement and tension between a Pastor and Deacons, the whole church will be aware of it, thus a high visibility exists. There will be little or no faithfulness, no mutual trust and no love. Work for the Lord suffers.

Harmony and fellowship in the Church must exist if the Lord’s blessings are to be experienced. The Pastor and Deacons must work together to establish and maintain this harmony and fellowship. To accomplish this, the Deacons must be faithful to their Pastor. (There are many other things to be considered along with their faithfulness to the Pastor, but for the purpose of this study, all the “other things” are considered to be in agreement and harmony.) There must be love, respect, and admiration for the Pastor, and he in return must have the same for the Deacons. Otherwise, there will not be a harmonious relationship.

## CONFIDENCE/TRUST

The very nature of the office of Deacon and the qualifications require that we be of honest report, grave (serious minded), and not double tongued. A Deacon must be trustworthy, a man of his word, a man in whom confidence can be placed, a man who talks straight and not out of “both sides of his mouth,” a man who is not a gossip (1 Tim. 3:8).

There will be times when a Pastor will need to confide in someone he can trust. A Deacon should be the logical choice. The relationship between the Pastor and Deacons should be such that there is a free exchange of

conversation. Each respecting the confidence and trust of the other. However, there may come a time when that confidence, that trust is lost. It’s a sad day when this occurs, but it happens.

Whatever or whenever the Pastor confides in us, be it personal matters, Church business, problems or fellow church members, or even visitors, that should be as far as it goes. Had the Pastor wanted everyone to know, it would have been announced from the pulpit. He gave us the information confidentially so that we might share a burden with him; to pray with him in seeking the Lord’s guidance and direction. He respects our judgment and has placed his trust in us. A tongue-wagging Deacon (or his wife) can cause havoc in a church.

Ladies, my sisters in Christ, let’s discuss your responsibilities in this realm. The Scriptures state that the husband and wife are one flesh (Gen. 2:23-24). You are to be “faithful in all things” (1 Tim. 3:11). Thus, I feel free to discuss matters with my wife. However, if the Pastor (or another) asks that a matter be kept strictly confidential, it is not discussed with her. She understands and respects my position. A faithful wife does not “bug” her husband regarding Deacon business. Neither do I “bug” her regarding things which (as a Deacon’s wife) may have been placed in her confidence. We should have utmost confidence and trust in our Pastor and his wife, and they in turn should have the same confidence and trust in us, the Deacon and his wife.

To be faithful to the Pastor in confidence and trust, a Deacon who is teaching should not teach contrary to the Pastor. This is assuming that his teaching and preaching is Biblical and true to the Word of God. If he teaches otherwise, then we need to be instrumental in correcting the condition. If I disagree with his teaching (and who am I to say I’m right), I may give the different view points on a Scripture, noting what and why the Pastor believes. Or, I may simply skip over that controversial Scripture and say nothing. But don’t undercut the Pastor. As an Under Shepherd, he is responsible for the preaching and teaching in the church he pastors. Likewise, as born again believers and especially as Deacons, we are responsible to the Lord for what we teach. Let us not forget, that our life and our actions are important forms of teaching.

## CONSULTATION AND GUIDANCE

The Bible reveals that down through the centuries men of God have received counsel and have provided counsel to others. Moses received counsel from his father-in-law (Ex. 18:17-26); Daniel gave counsel to the kings

of Babylon (Dan. 4:27); Ahithophel was a counselor of King David (2 Sam. 15:12); Joseph counseled the Pharaoh of Egypt (Gen. 41); Rehoboam sought counsel from men whom had served his father, Solomon (1 Ki. 12:6). In receiving or giving counsel, we must be extremely careful to seek and to follow Divine guidance. Rehoboam refused wise counsel and followed the unwise advise of his companions, which resulted in dividing the land (1 Ki. 12:6-24). As has been said, there's safety and wisdom in numbers (Prov. 11:14). A Pastor should not hesitate to consult and confide in the Deacons about church matters and business. As leaders in the church, Deacons are in a position to know the "thinking of the church" on many things and thus be in a position to counsel and guide the Pastor (Prov. 12:15; 15:22). Let's inject a word of caution at this point. We, the Pastor and Deacons, need to be very careful and not usurp the responsibility and authority of the church. The church is God's institution and to it He gave the Great Commission. We are servants and the Pastor the Under Shepherd.

In John 16:7 and 13 the Lord promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide us. He has fulfilled that promise. He also stated that He would be in our midst when we gather in His name (Mt. 18:20). He is! As prayer partners with our Pastor, we can pray and seek Divine guidance and wisdom (Jas. 1:5). When Daniel was confronted with Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he went to his three companions and they sought the "mercies of God" concerning the matter (Dan. 2:17-18). Obstacles and problems which appear gigantic and insurmountable to men, when placed in the Master's hands, can become very minor, disappear altogether or turn into a blessing. Earnest prayers coming from the sincere hearts of saints on their knees have tremendous power before the Throne of Grace (Rom. 8:26-27; Jer. 33:3). Let us always be thankful to our Lord for the wisdom and guidance He gives (Dan. 2:19-23).

Deacons are just ordinary men, "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). When asked, we should advise and provide guidance to the best of our ability. We should be honored that God's man has respect for our opinion. Likewise a prudent Pastor recognizes the value of wise counsel (Prov. 13:10).

## ENCOURAGEMENT

There are times in everyone's life when a word of encouragement is needed. This need exists from the cradle to the grave, from the illiterate to the educated, from the weak to the strong. Our Pastor is no exception. Even though he's God's man, in God's place, doing God's

business he still needs encouragement. He is not God! He is just human! We, as Deacons, need to give him that encouragement — "a slap on the back." He gets enough "kicks in the seat." He needs to be told he's loved and appreciated. Have you ever mentioned this to him? Encourage the Pastor when he is down! He can't always stay on top of the mountain, he gets down at times.

Jesus encouraged the sick (Mt. 9:2). He encouraged the Apostles when they were afraid (Mt. 14:27; Jn. 16:33). He encouraged Paul (Acts 23:11).

Yes, we need to encourage our Pastor in his preaching and teaching. Pray for him and encourage him in leading the church in the will of the Lord (2 Chr. 35:1-2).

## SUPPORT

We Deacons need to stand behind our Pastor, to strengthen and support him. He's called of the Lord, thus we need to give him honor, not in the sense of worship, for that is sin in itself. Only God is to be worshipped. We should respect him for the position he holds before the Lord (1 Tim. 5:17). Also, our Pastor should be a man whom we can respect because of his spotless character, his "clean" living, and his honesty and integrity. (If we cannot respect and honor our Pastor because of the man he is, we should look for a church where we can. Perhaps, the Pastor should examine his life. If in error, he should make amends and become a Pastor who can be respected and honored.)

There will be times when Deacons may not agree with the Pastor on matters to be brought before the church. The time for discussing these differences is not before the church body, but in Deacon's meetings or in private. If after discussing the matter, a Deacon still finds himself in the minority, he should agree with the Pastor and Brother Deacons so as to present a unified front when the matter is brought before the church. If however, after full discussion in a Pastor-Deacon meeting, a Deacon cannot agree with the majority, he should hold his peace on the floor of the church; i.e. if the church supports the Pastor. This is assuming that doctrinal or moral matters are not in question. When a doctrinal or moral issue is in question and he has scriptural backing, the Deacon should "hold his ground." If a Deacon feels he cannot work in harmony with the Pastor and church, he should seek a church where he can. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this discussion, it is a dangerous thing to disrupt the fellowship of a church.

Deacons should see that the Pastor receives an adequate salary. A salary on which he and his family

can live comfortably, with him not having to concern himself about such matters. This is not to say he is to live like “a king,” but if the church can afford it, he should have his needs well taken care of.

We should talk our Pastor up — not down; to speak well of him. And above all things, Deacons should carry their Pastor before the Throne of Grace in prayer, not just occasionally but frequently. To lift him up before the Lord, that the Lord might guide and direct him, that he might be filled with the Spirit as he ministers to the Flock. We should ask the Lord to build a hedge around him, to protect him from Satan and his demons (Job 1:10). We should love and appreciate him and let him know that we do (2 Tim. 4:16). Deacons and their wives fellowshiping with the Pastor and his wife will strengthen the bond of love one for the other.

## **RIGHT-HAND MAN**

We find that the Original Seven were selected by the church for the purpose of assisting the Apostles in administrative matters of the church. The Apostles were to “appoint” them over certain tasks and duties. The same should be true today. Deacons should be all around willing helpers of the Pastor, assisting him in those administrative and/or spiritual matters in the church. Acting on their own initiative without having to be told every little thing which requires their attention. Always being aware that we are “servants” of the Lord and His church (Acts 6:2-4).

Deacons should be prayer partners with the Pastor, seeking the Lord’s will and guidance and then giving their support to carry out His revealed will. Prayer, particularly “group prayer” with out Pastor and Deacon Brothers appears to be a weak area in a Deacon’s faithfulness.

## **LAY PREACHING**

Deacons are called by the church to perform certain duties. This does not preclude them from spreading the gospel and performing lay preaching. A man does not have to be called of the Lord to perform this type of ministry. Philip and Stephen, two of the Original Seven, were this type of men — performing lay preaching (Acts 6:8-15; 8:26-40). Some of the others may have done so, but the Scriptures do not inform us of such. Stephen gave that great message exalting and glorifying His Lord (Acts 7). It cost him his life; but he remained faithful to his God. Philip also preached, and years later at Caesarea,

was called the evangelist (Acts 21:8). He too remained faithful to his Lord.

I am not saying that all Deacons are to be lay preachers. If the Lord has given us this ability, then we should use it for His honor and glory. There are many places where we can be utilized, if we are willing servants. Nursing homes, jails, reform schools, etc., plus filling the pulpit when the Pastor is out of town or ill and there is no other minister to do the preaching, are places where we may be asked to present the gospel. We may not be eloquent speakers, and our message may not be properly organized, but if it contains the gospel, the Lord can use it. He is the one that gives the increase, we are but to do! We should be really careful before saying “I can’t” in the Lord’s work (Phil. 4:13).

## **FAITHFULNESS OF DEACONS**

### **TO HIS FAMILY**

The faithfulness of a Deacon to his family, although a very personal relationship, is highly visible both to the church and the world.

The Lord has established three institutions — Family, Government and Church, in that order. Satan has always been and still is attacking all three, doing all in his power to destroy them. Perhaps he is attacking the family the hardest, for if the family fails and is destroyed, the other two will be severely handicapped. The church will not fail, for Jesus said that the gates of hell should not prevail against His church (Mt. 16:18). God originated “that first family.” Marriage is sacred — the family is sacred. A Deacon must always remember this!

As has been said, “Someone is observing us,” is certainly true in this relationship. How faithful is that Deacon to his family? Does he provide for them, or is he a “self-spender?” That is, spends everything on himself and lets his family suffer! Does he treat them with love and respect? Does he maintain discipline (1 Tim. 3:12)? A Deacon must be faithful in teaching and training his family in the Word of God — in bringing them to Sunday School and church, a fundamental Baptist church which believes and practices the teachings of the Word of God. These are highly visible items.

With almost one out of every two marriages ending in divorce, and children running away or being neglected

and abused, it is imperative that a Deacon be faithful to his family. A survey on marriage and divorce recently conducted by a religious organization, found that where couples were married in the church and continued to attend church regularly, the divorce rate is one for every fifty marriages. Among couples who have a home prayer life, the divorce rate is one in every 1,105 marriages.

Prayer certainly changes things! But, how many couples pray together?

## WIFE

From the beginning, God established marriage as a sacred union between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24). Marriage was created for companionship, and love. Along with marriage, God created sex, which is to be after and inside the marriage vows. Sex was created for the continuance of the human race and for the pleasure of the marriage partners (Gen. 9:1; Heb. 13:4). God's commandments concerning marriage and faithfulness to the partners are not to rob people of joy, but rather to protect them that they might not lose that joy. He has built a wall around marriage, not to make it a prison, but a safe and beautiful place for the husband and wife.

Brethren, we are to remain faithful to that wife the Lord has given us. And vice versa — wives are to remain faithful to their husbands. The Scriptures say that finding a wife is a good thing and that we obtain favor of the Lord (Prov. 18:22; 31:10-31). Also, the Scriptures commands us to love our wives (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33). Tell her you love her! Thank the Lord for her! Thank the Lord for the children she bears!

We are to love and appreciate her. It is our obligation to provide for her needs, to protect her when in danger and to care for her in times of distress. She is a faithful companion. She is our "help meet" (Gen. 2:18). We must give honor to her and remain faithful to her (1 Pet. 3:7). The Lord will bless us for it.

Just a word to the wives, my Sisters in Christ Jesus. You are entering into a new role in your Christian and church life — a very unique position — a Deacon's wife. As such, you have a very important place in the church. Next to the Pastor's wife, you will be watched, you will be scrutinized as never before. But, you must remain faithful in every area which we have and will discuss where your husband is to be faithful. We will not discuss the qualification for a Deacon's wife as found in 1 Timothy 3. You have already met those prerequisites or your husbands would not have been considered for the office of Deacon. No place else in the Scriptures are women required to meet such requirements.

Ladies, to faithfully fulfill the obligations of the new office to which he has been elected, your husband will be giving of his time and energy. There will be occasions when personal plans may require changing or dinner dates may be canceled and delayed. Don't feel that he is deliberately neglecting you because he isn't. He loves you very much. He is just being faithful to his Lord and Master (Eph. 5:31-33).

As a Deacon's wife, you will often be working with your husband in performing the duties and responsibilities placed upon him as a servant of the Lord and His church. There will be times when he will confide in you and ask your opinion. Pray with him, support him, encourage him, for this is the Lord's work. Some things require utmost care and some things may be told him in strict confidence. Thus, there may be times when he will not be at liberty to tell you everything. Don't nag him, be patient, and in time, he may be able to reveal the matter to you.

Remember, my Sisters, that this new role into which you are entering is very important in the Lord's church. Your position is very special before the Lord, otherwise the Holy Spirit would not have placed such rigid requirement upon it. Use that position wisely (1 Pet. 3:1-6). I'll leave one last thought, a godly wife can cause a Deacon-husband to be a powerhouse for God and church, or a non-loving, non-sympathetic wife can cause many hours of grief and heartache and much embarrassment, even disgrace (Prov. 12:4).

## CHILDREN

We should thank the Lord for the children he has given us (Heb. 2:13). They are His gift (Psa. 127:3). Parents need to seek Divine guidance in developing those "gifts." Certainly, they need our prayers, our earnest prayers. Satan is attacking our young people as never before and the enticements of the world are great. As Deacons, we must train up our children — teaching them the Word of God — taking time to listen to their problems, their thoughts (Prov. 22:6; Dt. 6:5-7). Even the problems that are minor to adults, are "big" to children. Establish and maintain communication with them. Do not live a lie before them, i.e. be the same where ever you are. Don't be a "saint" at church and a "devil" at home. Children are not easily fooled and we can easily turn them against the Bible and Jesus Christ with such hypocrisy. Brethren, spending time with our children, loving, teaching, training them may save us many hours, yea even years of heartache at a later date. When this life is ended and our children stand before the Lord, what will be more important — the fine home, new car and the nicer things

of life we may have provided them, or sound Bible training in a loving Christian home which resulted in their salvation and possibly a life filled with good works for the Master.

Today, when young people are dropping out of church, we must be careful about what is said before them. Our Lord should be honored and glorified. The church and the Pastor should be built up before them. Godly men and women should be pointed out to them and they should be encouraged to live clean godly lives. Even though we may disagree with the Pastor or actions the church may have voted to do, these differences must not be aired before our children, unless it is a scriptural or doctrinal matter. Then, we need to go to the Scriptures and explain to them. It may be that many families have “roasted Preacher” and “boiled church” for Sunday dinner, thus causing our children to lose confidence in the Pastor and church. Certainly, as Deacons, we should not discuss “deacon” matters before them. Church gossip should never be repeated in their presence.

Brothers and Sisters, let’s emphasize again, we must love our children. They must be told that we love them and that God loves them. We must do all that is humanly possible to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus and salvation (Eph. 6:4). They must be encouraged to use their talents for the Lord. Their efforts and achievements in the Lord’s work should be praised and encouragement given. These young ones today are the church of tomorrow. They need to be well grounded in the faith to face the trials and temptations they encounter. And above all, pray and pray earnestly for them. They’re our kids!

## FAITHFULNESS OF DEACONS

### TO THE CALL

Deacons of a New Testament church are called, set-aside (proved) and ordained by the church as led by the Holy Spirit. It is an important “call” in that it is by the Lord’s Divine institution, the church. This “call” is not to be taken lightly. It is not an office to give honor or prestige to a man. But having met the qualification of Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3, and after much prayer seeking the Lord’s will, the church has “called” us. Next to that of a Pastor, a Deacon is the highest office in a church. In fact the Pastor and Deacon are the only scriptural

offices in the New Testament church. Yet, the Deacon, derived from the Greek word “*diakonos*,” simply means a servant — a humble servant of our Lord. As discussed, a Deacon is to remain faithful to his Lord, to his church, to his Pastor, and to his family. To remain faithful, we are to serve them to the best of our ability. There may be times when this places the Deacon in a most difficult position, especially when there are conflicts within the church family. As Deacons, we must remain faithful to our Lord. We must seek Divine wisdom and guidance and to the best of our ability, carry out His will (Jas. 1:5). I believe the Scriptures teach that we are to seek and to maintain peace and harmony, as did the Original Seven.

Deacons do not have the authority or power to “rule” the church or the Pastor. We should be servants and leaders within that body and have a great influence upon it, but we are not to “rule.” That power is given — invested in the church. Deacons are to carry out the church’s business and to assist the Under Shepherd as he leads the flock “whom we (the Apostles) may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3). I do not believe an individual church member has the authority to direct a Deacon to perform a task, but they may ask or request. On the other hand, the church body most certainly can direct and command the Deacons and Pastor, since it is God’s Divine institution and He gave it the “charge” and authority (Mt. 28:18-20).

A Deacon (active or inactive) in a Baptist church has a high visibility within that church. Deacons must always be mindful that next to the Pastor, we are among the highest examples of Christ in the church, and our world (people with whom we work, know and associate) is constantly watching the type of lives we live. Christ and His church should never be ashamed of what a Deacon does or says.

### A LIFETIME OBLIGATION

Acts 6:6 involves the ordination of the Original Seven. The Scriptures do not state a specific period of time for which they were to serve. 1 Timothy 3:13 indicates that a Deacon’s service spans over a considerable number of years. Thus, it has been said and is commonly considered that a Deacon is ordained for life. Due to moving of membership, a Deacon may become “inactive.” This does not mean that our life should change and that we are no longer obligated to fulfill the requirements of a Deacon, but that we are simply not acting in the capacity of a Deacon in that church. We are still a Deacon, but “inactive.” If the church so desires, we may be voted to

become “active.” It may be that a man in bad health can no longer fulfill the duties of the office and may request to become inactive or the church may ask him to become inactive so another man may take his place. Some churches may “rotate” the Deacons so that more men may serve. There may be other reasons why a Deacon may become inactive, but these are the most common.

There is one other case which must be considered. Satan may have so gotten hold of a Deacon that he is living a very worldly life. His life is such that it is a disgrace to the office of Deacon and a reproach to his Lord. If the man refuses to see the error of his way and to repent, then there is nothing left for the church to do but withdraw the hand of church fellowship and recall or revoke the ordination. It is a sad day when such occurs.

Since ordination is for life, a Deacon’s service becomes a life long obligation — a life long responsibility — a life long service of love and faithfulness. It is not a Sunday morning only obligation — but a seven day a week commitment.

## FAITHFUL SERVICE

A life time of service — a life full of love and faithfulness, without blame (1 Tim. 3:10). A service of giving, not only of time and goods, but of self. Often a thankless job, but a necessary service. Let us be found faithful, whatever the task!

Stephen was a faithful servant. A man “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 6:5). He was faithful to his Lord in proclaiming the gospel and contending for the faith. He was faithful to his love for his fellow man and the lost. He was dynamic in his presentation of the saving grace of God (Acts 6:8). “And Stephen, full of faith and power” (Acts 6:10). “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” Acts 7:2-53 provides the great discourse Stephen gave the Jews, which resulted in their rejection of Jesus Christ the Messiah. Still, he was faithful in forgiving those that hated and despised him and his message. His faithfulness resulted in his death (Acts 7:59-60). But, what a testimony he had (Acts 7:55-56). Faithful service! Faithful unto death! Christ-like in his death! I do not believe that Saul (Paul) ever forgot Stephen or his faithfulness to his Lord.

Philip was also a faithful servant. He was faithful to his Lord in that he yielded to the leadership of the Holy Spirit to preach and teach the gospel when and where directed (Acts 8:5-8, 26-27). The Apostles went to assist in the work started by a faithful servant, a Deacon. Philip was a faithful servant, doing and going where the Spirit led (Acts 8:14-25). He was just a humble obedient

Deacon, but God gave the increase (Acts 8:39-40). Philip continued to do good works, to bring joy and peace and harmony to all (Acts 21:8-10). Some thirty years later, Philip was still busy, rendering good and faithful service to the Lord.

Brethren, don’t ever underestimate what the Lord can do with a dedicated and faithful servant, even though he is just a Deacon. The other five may have been great men of God, which I’m certain they were. The Spirit only mentioned the works of these two in the Holy writings.

Faithful service unto the Lord is a rewarding service. However, service performed with an expectation of receiving an award is performed with the wrong motive. Our service should be out of love and reverence to our Lord and Savior. We must ever be mindful and grateful that the Lord and His church saw fit and thought us worthy to be called into His service, as Deacons. I certainly am not worthy, only Christ is worthy. Let us always remember this and let us always remain true and faithful to our Lord and His word (Col. 3:12-17).

## AN ACTIVE AND OBEDIENT SERVANT

If a Deacon has become “inactive” in that office it does not mean that we are to become inactive in the Lord’s work. We must remain active in witnessing, teaching, visiting, etc. Our’s is not a “sit down and do nothing” position.

Brethren, we should not remain idle. How are we to remain faithful, if we are idle (Jas. 2:17-18). Though we are not “called” of the Lord in the manner the Ministers are called, we are called to faithful service. We are examples to the church — we are leaders within the flock. If we are faithful unto the Lord, if we are obedient to Him, we must be busy in the Master’s vineyard doing what He would have us do (Lk. 12:42-43).

When we exercise faithful service, it is a certainty that Satan’s desire is to disrupt and nullify that service. Should our Lord permit Satan to have his desire (God is sovereign and controls all things (Psa. 29; 83:18; 135:5-6)). We can expect various devious means to be used in accomplishing that purpose. Perhaps the most frequently used methods are to discourage, to create doubt, to cause an indifferent attitude, or entice us to commit some terrible sin. Remember Peter! If these tactics are unsuccessful, our possessions, our health, or family may be attacked. Remember Job! What will be our response? Will we remain faithful or will we yield (Josh. 24:15; 1 Ki. 18:21)? Whatever tactic Satan may use, we must

never feel that God has forsaken us. He hasn't and He never will. We're His children. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). What a great promise from the True and Living God.

During these times of distress, we must stand firm in our faith. We must look to the Lord for strength — for encouragement (Josh. 1:6-7, 9). God does not permit Satan to "sift" us in order to weaken and destroy, but that we may become stronger in our faith and that others may also be encouraged and strengthened. As we grow in grace we will become a more active and a more obedient servant.

Whatever we do or fail to do, whether we are obedient or disobedient, will influence and affect the lives of others. When Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord and headed for Tarshish, it almost became a disaster to the ship and crew. His disobedience resulted in him spending three days and nights in an attitude adjustment chamber. When the obedient (but still resentful) Jonah preached the Lord's message as directed, Nineveh repented and a great revival resulted (Jonah 1-3). So it is with us. An idle disobedient servant may cause great heartache and trouble for self and others; but, an active obedient servant can bring joy and gladness to many. Let's be active! Let's be obedient!

## A GOOD WORK

Paul in writing to Timothy instructed him "Charge them that are rich in this world" (1 Tim. 6:17) — whether rich or poor in this world's goods, this scripture and the one following should apply especially to Deacons. But, let us look at verse 18: "That they do good, that they be rich in good works." Deacons should "do good" and if we remain true and faithful to the above discussed topics, we will "do good," (1 Tim. 6:19). The cornerstone on which a Deacon's service is established for "doing good" and building a "good work" is his faithfulness to the reverence of God. [We are not discussing salvation, for that is the first requirement for becoming a Deacon, but we are discussing works.] If a man fails here, in his faithfulness to the reverence of God, then he has lost his basis for doing good. He must recognize and give honor and reverence to Jesus Christ, "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting" (1 Tim. 6:15-16).

Again, Paul in writing to Titus, instructed him "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine

shewing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Tit. 2:7-8). These items should certainly be applicable to Deacons. We should surely be seen of others "a pattern of good works." And, as Paul so capably brings out here — "in doctrine," "sound speech," only emphasizes the point, that we as Deacons *must* know the Scriptures and the Doctrines they proclaim.

As we endeavor to do good, our very attitude in which we perform can have a great influence upon the results achieved. A humble, willing, and cheerful attitude will attract more followers for the Lord than an arrogant, resentful, grumpy attitude. Christians should be happy people. We have been saved. We have been redeemed. We have a hope, the promise of the return of our Blessed Lord and Savior. Deacons should especially exhibit these attributes — "a pattern of good works." Even though at times our tasks may be difficult and grievous, we should do them without complaining (Phil. 2:14-16). By taking a Christ-like attitude and exhibiting "a pattern of good works," perhaps we Deacons by the very life we live, may encourage other Christians to do good and influence the unsaved to trust Jesus (Heb. 10:24).

## PRIDE

The Bible contains some harsh and severe words regarding pride. Just to note a couple (Prov. 16:18; 29:23). In Mark 7:20-23, Jesus placed the sin of pride among the most evil of sins, and He says, "these evil things come from within, and defile the man." We as Deacons must be most careful that we do not let pride enter into our lives and affect our service to Him. Pride, pride in what "I" do, has been the downfall of many great people of the Lord. I say "people" for both men and women are subject to this "evil things." People who had great testimonies for the Lord, who were doing great and wonderful works, have been hampered by this one thing, pride — self pride. Taking credit for what the Lord has done through them. [This can almost be classified as "self-righteousness.] How we need; how we must give the Lord the praise, the glory, the credit for all that He has or will accomplish through us if we only yield to Him.

I think there has been enough said on this subject. Yet, there is a place for pride. In doing the Lord's work, we must take pride — we must do His work to the best of our ability. We must not do "sloppy" half-hearted work. Give Him our best performance. There is also a place for pride in our lives — we need to take pride in

our appearance, our dress, our home, the things we possess. We should be proud of our family, our church, nation, etc.

## BOASTING

Do you want to be put on the shelf? One of the best ways to become ineffective in the work of our Lord, is to boast (Jas. 4:16). A deacon's work does not include a place for listing of accomplishments and good works. Neither does it include a "brag list" whereby we may glory in what we have done. We have done nought! It is the Lord's doing and if He has permitted us to be used of Him, then we should be humble, thankful and give Him the praise and glory.

Reflecting back, wherein do we have to boast. The Lord in His infinite wisdom acting through the church, selected and ordained us. Any talents or abilities we may have, He has given us. Most of our tasks are assigned by the Pastor or church, who are led by the Lord. Frankly, there is nothing left for us to boast about.

Proverbs 27:1-2 are very applicable verses for Deacons. But we need to be very careful how verse 2 is handled. Any praise which we may receive in the Lord's work should be graciously accepted with humbleness. The giver (praiser) should be thanked with all sincerity, giving the Lord all the praise and glory. In a similar manner, we should be like the Apostles in Acts 5:41 — rejoice, that He counts us worthy to serve Him.

## HUMBLE

Much has been said in these discussions about being humble. Humbleness, tempered with firmness, is the sign of a true servant. As James wrote in 4:10, that if we are humble, He will lift us up.

As we look through the Scriptures, we find great men of God were humble in His service. But, when they became haughty, high-minded, rebellious, the Lord chastised them. The Lord has not changed. He still chastises. Peter had to be "sifted" before he became a humble servant and a great man of God. He learned the lesson well, for writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he discusses humility (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

Joseph was a humble servant. A man who produced good works everywhere he went. Yet, he was ill-treated for those good works. Still, he remained faithful, he remained humble, and he praised and glorified the True and Living God. Then, one day, God raised him up and exalted him. A study of Joseph's life, about whom the

Bible has nothing bad to say, should serve as an example of faithfulness to Deacons. May we be found blameless, rendering faithful service to our Lord.

## GLORY TO GOD

Christians, especially Deacons, should glorify our God, the only True and Living God. How are we to glorify Him?

**By Praise!** Notice how David glorified the Lord by praising Him (1 Chr. 29:10-19; Psalms 22-23). We too can praise the Lord, in words, in song, in the life we live (Psalms 9:11).

**By Good Works** (Mt. 5:16)! The very office of Deacon requires good works. Those works should be of such a nature, that when seen by others, the works themselves and the witnesses will glorify our Lord. Our works should not be performed to receive praise of men, but to honor and glorify God.

**By Fruit Bearing!** Certainly, when a soul is led to salvation, Jesus Christ is glorified. The Father is glorified. There's joy in heaven. We should be ever aware of opportunities to witness of His saving power and to present the gospel (John 15:8).

**By Spiritual Unity!** As discussed earlier, the scriptures do not state what the first Seven did to restore fellowship with the first church. But working in the Spirit of the Lord they restored peace, harmony and unity and the Lord showered His blessings upon the church. Today, Deacons are to strive to maintain that peace, harmony, unity and fellowship within the church. Jesus Christ cannot be properly worshipped in Truth and in Spirit where there is discord in the Body (Rom. 15:6).

**By Entire Consecration!** Our whole being should be used in glorifying God (1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31). Whatever we do should be honoring to God. Deacon's lives should be blameless before men, should not bring dishonor to the Lord, but bring praise and glory to Him.

Thus, there are many ways in which we can glorify our God. To please our Lord should be our goal; and in so doing God will receive glory (2 Thess. 1:12).

## A GOOD DEGREE

Brethren, 1 Timothy 3:13 contains a great message to Deacons. "For they that have used the office of Deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." First, there is the underlying challenge to use the office well. Second, there is the promise of procuring a good

degree and great boldness in the faith.

It should be the desire of every Deacon to faithfully serve that office to the best of his ability. The qualifications for this “honored office” do not require that a man be highly educated, nor does it require that he be a skilled craftsman. Thus, a Deacon may be highly or poorly educated. He may be a man skilled or unskilled with his hands. To any and all, the challenge is the same. If a man is willing to be used of the Lord, if he is faithful to the duties of that office, then the Lord can use him regardless of education or skills. I am so thankful to the Lord for this. It is not how much (many or few talents) we possess, but how we use what we do possess (Mt. 25:14-30). The challenge is the same, the opportunity is the same for all! We must do our best, it is the Lord’s work, we must remain faithful to use the office well!

Third, “purchase to themselves a good degree.” To “purchase” means “to gain.” The word “degree” simply means a “step,” going up higher or taking an additional step of dignity, honor or standing among fellow Christians. It does not mean stepping to a higher office, for there is only one other scriptural office, that of a Minister. A Minister is God-called. It may be that the Lord will call some Deacons into the Ministry, but not all. Thus, it means that a Deacon using his office well, will reach new heights in responsibilities or in influence. “And great boldness in the faith” simply means that the Deacon will speak out for the Faith, and for his Lord. This is why we as Deacons, need to know the Scriptures and be able to explain the Faith and why we believe it — to speak with confidence and truth. Such men will have high esteem within their church, their community (circle of friends) and with the Lord Himself. Notice the attitude of the Lord toward the faithful Deacon, Stephen (Acts 7:56). Other times we read of the Lord being seated, but here He is standing. Could it be that He was standing to welcome faithful Stephen?

Yes, it should be our desire to use the office of Deacon well. To faithfully serve whenever, wherever, whatever our Lord assigns. If we are faithful in the areas discussed, we will have: the blessings of God; won the hearts of the people; the Pastor will thank the Lord for us; our families will love and honor us, and we will have gained an honorable position before our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus (Rom. 12:1-2).

**GOD BLESS YOU!!**



