

# COMMITMENT #12

## A STRONG CHURCH IS SERVED WELL BY BIBLICALLY QUALIFIED DEACONS.

*A deacon must be faithful.... Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. —1 Timothy 3:13 NASB*

### DEFINITION

The Scriptures teach that the church and the elders are to be served by qualified deacons. Deacons are to be tested for a season related to their character, competence, and capacity to serve as a deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-11). Upon proving qualification, deacons are tasked with serving the elders in doing justice and perhaps in leading volunteer teams in areas that impact the entire church (e.g. gatherings, events, hospitality, financial systems, etc.). Churches that are able to contend for the scriptural parameters of deaconship and contextualize for the practical issues that arise in a given context will effectively lead their church to greater fruitfulness.

### QUOTES TO PONDER

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. —Mark 10:45 NASB*

*Elders delegate tasks to deacons. While the New Testament outlines in copious detail the practical duties of elders, it offers almost no teaching about the roles and responsibilities of deacons. Based on the primacy of eldership and the apostolic pattern in Acts 6, it seems that the job of a deacon is to serve as a “pastoral assistant” under the oversight and direction of the elders. The elders delegate practical ministry to the deacons as the size and needs of the church increase. —Bob Thune*

*Only the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ, and the millions of ‘mini-churches’ (Christian homes) throughout the country can attack the roots of social problems...Because of sin we are depraved individually and socially—only the Gospel of Jesus can minister to the whole person. —Tim Keller*

*The specific “functions” for deacons are never spelled out in detail—except the one that is inherent in their title—to “serve” (diakoneo). —Gene A. Getz*

*Deacons can serve in a variety of ways. There are two main areas of service—community -focused and mission-focused. Mission-focused deacons serve in ways that change over time. For example, the Early Church probably didn’t have Media or Arts Deacons but they did have deacons that served widows and orphans. As the church expands and contracts throughout history, moving from continent to continent, culture to culture, the expression of the church varies. As a result, there are some areas of service that remain the same and others that change. Why is this? The cultural and historical expression of the church requires different deacons to serve the mission of the church and a church of mission. Changing and varying cultural contexts will require new pathways of service in order for the church to faithfully engage in its mission to redemptively engage peoples and cultures with the gospel of Christ. On the other*



*hand, there are deacon ministries that are pretty standard, transcultural and transhistorical such as: mission/social justice, community/benevolence, financial. These ministries have historical and biblical precedent, serving a church of mission. So there are community-focused and mission-focused areas of ministry for deacons, ministries that serve the mission of the church and ministries that serve the church of mission. —Jonathan Dodson*

## BIBLE STUDY

### Read Acts 6:1-7.

What did it mean for the elders to give their attention to “prayer and the ministry of the word” at this stage in the church’s development? (Reference: Acts 2:47b, 4:4, 5:14, 5:41-42). In modern readings, this is sometimes used to describe a pastor sequestered to his study all week to bring a sermon to Christians in gathered worship. Is this reading contextually representative of what was going with “ministry of the word” in Acts?

After new leadership capacity was established, what was the result (Acts 6:7)?

Have you seen recent scenarios where administration (or disunity) created bottlenecks for the gospel advance with those who don’t yet know Jesus? How do you think churches can monitor this practically and respond accordingly?

## QUESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Where is your church currently experiencing administrative bottlenecks? Where are elders doing deacon functions? Do you believe you have enough deacons for the current work?

What is your church’s process for appointing qualified deacons? Do you currently have qualified deacons in place? Are they recognized as such and have they been tested?



Do your elders delegate responsibility to deacons, especially to handle issues that would otherwise take them away from their primary roles and responsibilities? How are your deacons serving the elders and the church currently?

How are you ensuring that deacons have a sustainable work-load and not burning out from overworking? Who is checking in on them and how often? Are deacons encouraged to lead teams of volunteers? Are they trained and resourced to do so?

Initially, churches were quite small and able to oversee the church without much delegation. As churches grow, so does the complexity of managing all of the needs. Read the following list of potential deacons areas:

Facilitate social justice work in the region	Missional Community/small group leaders	Facilitating and leading in worship and the arts
Directing/overseeing children’s discipleship	Assisting with sermon research	Overseeing worship gatherings
Serving in the facilitation of church finances	Teaching trainings and/or overseeing membership process	Coaching/discipling community leaders
Serving in non-equipper staff roles (administrator, assistant, intern, etc.)	Serving to communicate and assimilate new folks into communities	Planning and facilitating retreats, conferences, and events
Hospitality/greeters	Leading in ministries of intercession and prayer	Assisting in matters of church discipline
Pastoral care (e.g. staff or volunteer gospel shepherds)		

Does this list expose any gaps or give you any ideas about where additional deacons might be raised up to expand the leadership base of the church? Do any specific individuals come to mind and in what areas?

What other insights would be helpful to better understand this area in your church?



## COMMITTED TO ACTION

What's one thing you or your team could do this week to strengthen this area?

What would it take to see this commitment strengthened over the next year?

