

# Restoration Revisited (4): When Everyone Is a Deacon

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(Acts 6:1-7)

## I. Introduction

- A. When I was a youth minister, I got yelled at by a deacon (still traumatized)
1. We took teens to hospital on Sundays to visit the sick of our church
    - a. And there were plenty sick of our church! (*Average age was 65+*)
    - b. What we didn't have were chaperones; some of the kids drove
    - c. That caused issues, so elders asked us to just shut the program down
  2. Deacon in charge of youth group was upset and came gunning for me  
*"They can't decide that unless they get my approval; I'm the deacon here"*
    - a. I wanted to bark back, *"Get off the couch and get to deac-ing!"*
    - b. He had a car and Sunday afternoons off—he could have deac-ed
      - 1) He was a **consultant**; elders and I should have consulted him
      - 2) He was a **critic**; he was there to tell us we were doing it wrong
    - c. He church "chain of command." He was management, no labor!
- B. **Point:** Many people see deacons as part of church "*chain of command*"
1. Paul begins Philippians with a pretty formal greeting (**Phil 1:1**)
    - a. It sounds like Paul is officially greeting all on the church letterhead
    - b. The word "*overseers*" here is Greek word ἐπίσκοπος or "*bishop*"
  2. "*Bishops*" sounds like he's talking about a chain of command, right?
    - a. So, deacons are next in the power-chain, right? *Like junior elders?*
    - b. That power chain is why we don't have female deacons, right?
    - c. Well, that and we don't read the Bible closely enough! (**Rom 16:1**)
  3. **Point:** Deacons were servants, not part of a church chain of command
    - a. Lexicon defines διάκονος as "*to wait table, to care for, to serve*"
      - 1) It's different word from office of "*public service*" (**Luke 1:23**)
      - 2) No, it's "*wait-on-someone-hand-n-foot*" (**John 12:2, Matt 22:13**)
      - 3) Paul uses this word to downplay his own status (**1 Cor 3:5**)
    - b. This word is never used as a "chain of command" type leader
    - c. In fact, Jesus sees διάκονος as the exact opposite! (**Matt 20:26-27**)
  4. The deacon has nothing to do with the church's chain of command.
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- C. We continue today with our ongoing study series “*Restoration Revisited*”
1. “*Restoration Movement*” was a revival on American frontier in 1800
    - a. It had as its goal the desire to unite all believers into one body
    - b. We wanted to go “back to the Bible” beyond creeds and traditions
      - 1) We focused on forms—communion, singing, missions, teaching
      - 2) But we couldn’t agree on forms, so we fought and we fractured
  2. But what if restoration isn’t about “*doing Bible things in Bible ways*”
    - a. What if restoration is restoring the passion and power of NT church?
    - b. It’s about doing Bible things in such a way that God is seen in us
  3. **Question for Today:** “*What if we made everyone here a deacon?*”
    - a. I know you’re thinking, “*Doesn’t it say deacons must give up wine?*”
    - b. Seriously, what if we turned upside-down how we see org chart
    - c. What if we all are saw ourselves as deacons, serving one another?

## II. When Everyone Is a Deacon

- A. In **Acts 6**, the church’s growth was threatened by its own growth
1. One reason the church grew was that it took care of its own (**4:32**)
    - a. Rapid growth means chaos, and chaos means some are overlooked
    - b. The ones overlooked were the most vulnerable, out-of-town widows
      - 1) Were Greek widows overlooked? Or was that just an impression?
      - 2) In the end it didn’t matter; the unity of the church was threatened
  2. The apostles act quickly to solve the problem (**Reading: Acts 6:1-4**)
    - a. We generally call the seven men who were chosen “*first deacons*”
    - b. That wasn’t their title or position—it was their job description
      - 1) The apostles would preach and let these guys wait tables (**6:2**)
      - 2) This is why we call them “deacon” because they we to “deac”
    - c. You might notice that most of these names are similar (**Acts 6:5**)
      - 1) Most of these names are Greek; what better way to solve issue
      - 2) The church at Jerusalem acted quickly and used common sense
      - 3) Now that a pattern that more churches need to restore, right?
  3. Getting the deacons serving got everything settled down and ontrack

- B. Not everyone was a deacon, right? Deacons were special leaders, right?
1. These guys weren't only chosen but formally "*ordained*" ([Acts 6:6](#))
    - a. Paul gives a formal list of qualifications for deacons ([1 Tim 3](#))
    - b. List for deacons is similar to list for elders/bishops (*more stringent*)
    - c. If a deacon's role was service (*wait tables*), why the formal list?
      - 1) Well, because the deacon is representing the church as he serves
      - 2) You want to make sure that he is the right kind of ambassador
      - 3) That's why the bruhaha in Richmond; don't want just any serving!
  2. There's an interesting statement here in Paul's list ([1 Tim 3:10](#))
    - a. The point is that they're to serve first before they are recognized
      - 1) The KJV here has "*office of deacon.*" There's no "office" here
      - 2) This is verb form of *διάκονος*, "*let them deac or wait tables*"
    - b. **Think:** How do churches select deacons? Election? Beauty contest?
      - 1) Generally, we need more deacons and ask for nominations
      - 2) There is a period of time for objections and then final voter
      - 3) And after they are "elected" deacon, THEN we find them job
    - c. And often, that job is a finding a slot on the org chart "in charge"
      - 1) We once had a deacon (John) in charge of women's ministry
      - 2) He said, "*They made me deacon; I had to be over something*"
  3. Paul is saying here, "*Find people who deac and then deaconize them*"
- C. This hierarchical view of leadership keeps us from being the NT church
1. The church becomes an organization led by people who are in charge
    - a. The elders make the decisions and the deacons manage the work
    - b. The preacher get blamed for everything and he the one we fire
    - c. Church as organization we "join" to meet our spiritual needs
  2. Ever hear someone say, "*Know what they need down there at church?*"
    - a. It could be anything, right? New program, or plan or preacher
      - 1) Old Story: "*You know what they need down there? Chandelier*"
      - 2) Response: "*We don't know how to play it; besides we need light*"
    - b. Problem isn't chandeliers; problem is seeing the church as "they"
    - c. It is the idea that service (deaconing) flows from the top down

3. Thom Rainer is CEO of Lifeway and researches and writes on church
  - a. He wrote an article *“The Main Reason People Leave a Church”*
    - 1) There are good reasons to leave a church, but one main reason
    - 2) There are all kinds of things said on exit surveys to ex-members
      - “The worship leader refused to listen about songs and music I wanted.”*
      - “The pastor did not feed me.”* *“No one from my church visited me.”*
      - “I was out for two weeks and no one called to check on me.”*
  - b. He suggested that all of those can be combined in one reason
    - The main reason people leave a church to find another one is because they have an entitlement mentality rather than a servant mentality.*
  - c. We see church as a “they” that’s supposed to meet my needs

### III. Conclusion

- A. How do we go about challenging this consumer view? Rainer suggests
  1. **Raise the Bar of Expectation:** Everyone is expected to serve others
    - a. Should the church meet your needs? Sure, you should meet ours
    - b. Church is not an organization; it is rather a family or a body
      - 1) What is the point that Paul makes about the body (**Eph 4:16**)
      - 2) The church grows when every part of the body does its part
  2. **Mentor Others:** Those who do serve must drag along others with them
    - a. The temptation is to complain, *“Why am I the one doing this?”*
    - b. **Secret:** As long as you are doing it, people will be happy to let you
    - c. Every job that worth doing is worth having assistant while you do it
  3. **Get People into Small Groups:** We suggested this in earlier lesson
    - a. Our “theater” format makes the NT function of fellowship harder
    - b. It’s just too easy to sit back and expect the church butler to serve
    - c. Small groups remind us that we’re all butlers who are to serve
- B. Church is not “them” or “they.” It is we and us! We all must be church
  1. We are all deacons that need to get about the business of serving
    - a. Get a table and wait on it! Can’t find one? Find an elder and demand
    - b. If you aren’t waiting on a table (other than communion), why not?
    - c. We have to get out of the rut of seeing church as a spectator sport
  2. Today the Lord is calling us to, *“Rise Up O Church of God...”*