

Deacon Training Manual

Introduction from Dr. David C. Little

It is wonderful to be saved! Praise to God for His unspeakable gift. It is a wonder God doesn't take us straight to heaven at the moment of our salvation. He loves us so much and has paid such a price for our salvation that you would think that He would want us to be with Him immediately. But God doesn't do that. He leaves us here to serve.

I served as a pastor for twenty-eight years. They were very good years, and there is nothing as precious as being a shepherd of God's people. In those years, I was spiritually blessed to have wonderful, godly men as deacons. A few of those men were used of God to mold my ministry life, and I will be eternally indebted to them.

When I became the president of Baptist Church Planters (a church planting agency), I determined to give church planters every tool possible to enhance and strengthen the churches they were starting. As missionaries start churches, their purpose is to bring the churches to graduation. To do so, they must have leadership in place, which means a pastor and deacons. Too often, men are put into the office of deacon who have no idea what that necessarily means. I felt it would profit the missionaries and church plants if they had material that could be used to teach qualified men what deacons are and do. Thus, I started this project which I trust will help many churches and will also help men to be used of God as deacons.

It is my prayer that God will use this book to help men be godly servants, and if chosen by the church to be a deacon, will serve as God intended.

Dr. David C. Little



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Lesson One - What is a Deacon?

To understand what God expects of a deacon, we must turn to the Word of God and find out how the biblical word is used. No one should assume that he knows what a deacon is or does until he has thoroughly searched the Scriptures.

The Greek word is diakoneo *dee-ak-on-eh'-o* – found in the Bible 37 times, translated servant, serve, deacon or minister. When it uses the word ‘minister,’ it is not talking about an ordained pastor.

It means: to be a servant, attendant, wait upon. It is used to describe a minister, one that waits on guests (as a waiter or waitress), a person who supplies food and the necessities of life. Sometimes the servant would care for the poor or sick.

Notice how the word is used in the New Testament:

Mt 4:11 “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”

Mt 20:26 “But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.”

Mr 10:45 “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Lu 10:40 “But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.”

Joh 12:26 “ If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.”

Ac 6:2 “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.”

Ac 19:22 “So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.”

Heb 6:10 “For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

Php 1:1 “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”

Col 1:7 “As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.”

Notice how the word was used in the preceding verses:

- Angels ministered to Jesus.
- Jesus ministered to those to whom He was sent.
- Martha ministered to those in need of hospitality.

Lesson Seven - Deacons and Counseling

In the ministry of caring for your membership group, you will come upon some difficult problems. Counselors call this “baggage.” Newly saved people often come with a lot of baggage. What do you do when such cases need counseling?

The following suggestions are simplified for teaching purposes:

1. Listen. You should not minimize the power of listening. Remember, you are not responsible to have all the answers. The temptation is to quickly open your mouth with an answer. This is a big mistake. It is far better to listen and then say, “I am going to take this to the Lord in prayer and seek His will regarding this matter.” This does a number of things:
 - Let the person know you believe God has something to say about it.
 - Gives you time to think about it and pray.
 - Gives you time to consult with the pastor.
 - Allows another time to get back with them, building the relationship. (Don’t be surprised that when you go back the problem is resolved.)
2. A mentor gave me this little outline that you might want to keep in the cover of your Bible, just in case you need it. It goes like this:
 - Recognize reality- most people with problems are not facing the truth.
 - Realize the resources- God has multiple ways to help you.
 - React responsibly- Don’t panic. Determine to do the right thing.This is pretty simple but profound. This will help you in ways you cannot imagine.
3. Always give them a portion of scripture to memorize. Remember, the Bible promises success to those who hide God’s Word in their heart. You cannot beat it.
4. Realize the power of prayer. I believe that if you and the person counseled will regularly ask for God’s help specifically, God will answer that prayer. Persistence is the key. For this reason, keep a running log of specific prayer requests for the people you are counseling. A note about this. Make prayer requests specific to the person counseled, not about others. You will note that the real problems people have are within themselves, but they often blame their problems on people around them. Illustration: “Pray that my husband gets saved” is okay, but we do not know God’s purpose for his life. A better prayer would be “Pray that I will be a good example before my husband, demonstrating the grace of God to him.” This request aligns with scripture and is attainable.
5. Remember, when people ask you to keep confidence, you cannot tell anyone. Now, if someone says they are going to do something to hurt themselves or someone else, you have to tell them that you are going to get them help. If not an emergency, and you feel you need to share with the Pastor for help, call them and ask them if you can share it with the person you want to get help from. Most will allow you to do so.

There is one exception in this area of keeping confidence:

When minors are involved, a counselor should never promise to keep confidence and then be placed in the unfortunate circumstance of having to break that confidence when some issue arises that the parents need to know. A good preface to use is a statement like: “I want to keep this conversation as private as possible, but I can’t make that promise unconditionally. God hasn’t placed me in the position of your parent. They are the ones who have the ultimate

Leader #2 - **Peter, big hearted, leap before I look type.**

This leader is talkative, outgoing, spontaneous, outspoken, influential, usually cheerful, and very reactive. This leader is very emotional. When this leader is up, he is the life of the party. When this person is angry, watch out!

It is interesting to see Peter's reactions to various situations. Probably he will be talking. Note several of these situations and Peter's reactions.

- A. Reaction to Christ's identity (Matthew 16:15-16).
- B. Reaction to Christ's purpose (Matthew 16: 21-22).
- C. Reaction to Christ's glory (Matthew 17:1-4).
- D. Reaction to Christ's ownership (Matthew 19:23-27).
- E. Reaction to Christ's death (Matthew 26:31-35).
- F. Reaction to Christ's suffering (Matthew 26:37-40).
- G. Reaction to Christ's arrest (Matthew 26:50-51).
- H. Reaction to Christ's resurrection (John 20:1-6).

Peter Type:

1. Good intentions – work on follow through.
2. Check impulsiveness.
3. Learn to listen, don't always talk.
4. Their enthusiasm is an encourager.
5. Tap into their generosity.
6. Beware of the great mood swings.

Leader #3 - **Timothy, the gifted but laid back type.**

Within every local ministry, there is the type of person who would rather sit in the background without taking steps of public initiative. Though supportive of the ministry and other leaders, this type of person is so laid back, often they are overlooked for ministry opportunities. The Timothy type of leader has a good attitude toward authority. They are not highly self-motivated. They are quiet and reticent. Seldom are they offensive. This person has to be pushed to unusual limits before he or she expresses harshness. They could easily be called the reluctant leader.

Think of Timothy. There are several things to remember about this dear ministry partner.

- A. He was able to teach (1 Timothy 1:3a).
- B. He was able to be tactful (I Timothy 1:3b).
- C. He was able to be trusted; but needed genuine encouragement. This encouragement is seen in the following areas of his life.
 - (1) Warfare (I Timothy 1:18).
 - (2) Ministry (I Timothy 4:13-16).
 - (3) Character (I Timothy 6:12-14).
 - (4) Commitment (I Timothy 6:20).

The Timothy Type:

1. Learn the disciplines of self-motivation.
2. Make decisions even when it is hard.
3. Make lists, check goals, stay focused.
4. Don't allow fears to rob obedience and faith.

Leader # 4 - **John, the unconditional lover of hard to love people.**

This type of leader is tenderhearted, loving, and compassionate. The "John type" is very gifted, often in music or writing. This person longs to be helpful, expressive, and demonstrative of the love of God. This person can genuinely feel the needs of others who are hurting and discouraged.

Notice two interesting things about a John leader:

- A. See how deeply he cares.
 - (1) Deeply loves the Lord Jesus (John 13:23).

John Type:

1. Easily hurt, very sensitive toward self and others.
2. Often is gentle on others and hard on self.
3. Can carry grudges.
4. Super in creativity and imagination.
5. Wonderful in hurting situations.

- (2) Moved by the marks of genuine discipleship (John 13:34-35). This is further illustrated in his mentioning “love” twenty-five times in his epistles.
- (3) Instantly adopts Christ’s mother and cares for her (John 19:26).

- B. See the interesting cautions about this type of leader.
 - (1) Really sensitive and may in rare times have a jealous situation (Mark 9:38).
 - (2) Remembers hurts and may in rare times be revengeful (Luke 9:54).

Leader #5 - **Barnabas, the oil that makes the machine run quietly type.**

This leader is a good judge of character. This person is generous, encouraging, and might even be called a risk taker when it comes to others. This leader is gracious, forgiving, and ready to see the positive in others.

Notice several things about Barnabas:

- A. He was unselfish in giving (Acts 4:37).
- B. He was unconditional in acceptance (Acts 9:26-27).
- C. He was uncompromising in testimony (Acts 11:19-24).
- D. He was unusual in grace and forgiveness (Acts 15:36-41).

Barnabas Type:

1. Good judge of character.
2. Risk taker.
3. Gives of self.
4. Sees potential in people.
5. Wonderful in assimilating new folks.

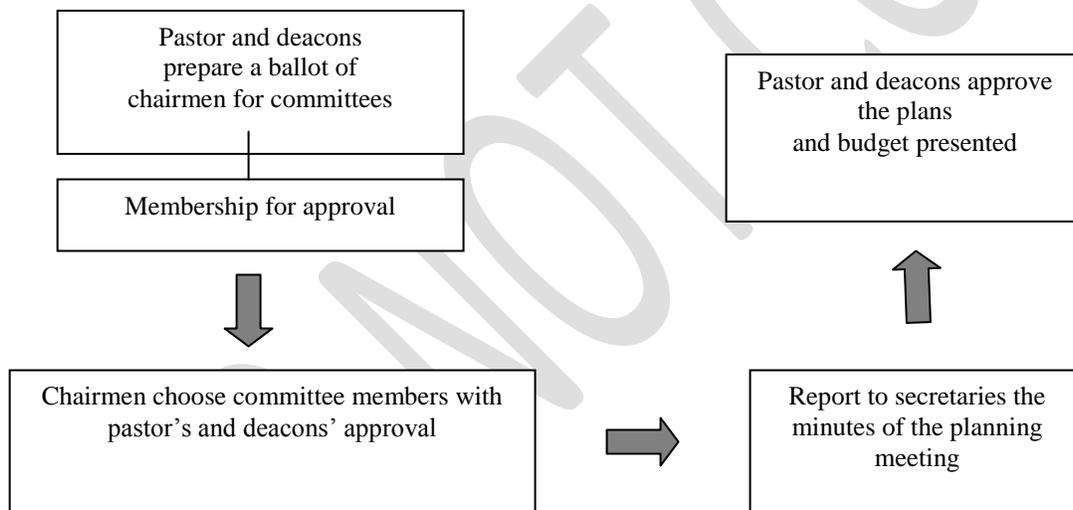
While there may be other styles of leadership, these are the five basic styles to be found in every local ministry. Every style has its problems as well as potential. Think of these in practical ways for just a moment.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Paul | <p><u>Problems</u>
 Not patient with others
 Critical spirit
 Can be harsh/domineering
 Drives people too hard</p> | <p><u>Potential</u>
 Great organizer
 Good motivator
 Good insight
 Never quits</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Peter | <p><u>Problems</u>
 Can be too talkative
 Exaggerates
 Doesn't follow through
 Speaks before thinking
 Explosive</p> | <p><u>Potential</u>
 Able to influence
 Fun to be with
 Great to be with
 Greets visitors well
 Sees lighter side</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Timothy | <p><u>Problems</u>
 Procrastinator
 Appears lazy
 Too laid back
 Waits to be asked</p> | <p><u>Potential</u>
 Gentleness and grace
 Not easily offended
 Not offensive
 Works well with people</p> |

How it works

- Determine what ministries you want.
- Find the most capable person to lead that ministry.
- Make the appointment with church approval.
- Allow the chairman to choose their committee.
- Chairman checks with his appointed deacon before approaching a possible committee member.
- Pastor works with the chairman on their agenda for committee meeting.
- Each person can be on only one committee.
- All meet the same night.
- Pastor shares his plans.
- Committees make plans- one year in advance, next four months detailed.
- Report to secretary.
- Deacons review the plans at their deacon's meeting.

Flow of Decision Making



Why the system works

- Decisions are grass root-with the people who do the work.
- It uses the maximum amount of people for administration.
- It gives people value and ownership.
- It doesn't allow any one person to rule.
- It keeps the deacons free to care for the spiritual needs of the church body.
- It holds leaders accountable, but in a workable system.
- The church sees things getting done.