

Qualities of a Good Deacon (Servant)

by Bryan Gibson

The New Testament word “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, and it simply means a servant. To better understand the work of deacons, let’s look at two things: the qualities of a good servant, and the things that should motivate a servant.

Qualities

He is humble, and so he will “look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). His concern is not “to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). In other words, he has the mind of a servant, which is really the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-11).

He is willing to take orders (“obey those who rule over you, and be submissive”—Hebrews 13:17). Thayer includes this thought in his definition of *diakonos*: “one who executes the commands of another...”). As a specially appointed servant of the church, he will be assigned tasks by the elders. He should be eager and willing to perform these tasks.

He will promptly and faithfully carry out all his duties (Acts 12:25; Colossians 4:17), even those that *seem* unimportant (“he who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much”—Luke 16:10). A good servant can be trusted to get the job done and done right (notice the kind of men appointed to duties in Nehemiah 7:1-2; 13:13). Some people are good at getting a job started, but have a hard time finishing it. A faithful servant will complete his work (2 Corinthians 8:11), even if it involves personal sacrifice (example of Epaphroditus—Philippians 2:25-30; example of Paul—Romans 15:25; Acts 24:17; Acts 20:22-24; 21:10-14).

He is not “wise in his own opinion” (Romans 12:16), which enables him to work well with others. He understands and applies the command, “be submissive to one another” (1 Peter 5:5).

He is thankful for the ability God gives him, and he uses it (“if anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies”—1 Peter 4:11).

A good servant will be motivated by...

A desire to please God, not men (Matthew 6:1-18—Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for doing their good deeds to be seen by men).

The good he can do his brethren, not only in the specific things he does, but also in the example he sets. With diligent, zealous service, a deacon can stir up others to be more zealous (“your zeal has stirred up the majority”—2 Corinthians 9:1-2).

The knowledge that when he ministers to his brethren, he is ministering to Christ (“inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”—Matthew 25:34-46).

By the good he can do for himself (“for those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith...”—1 Timothy 3:13).

By the reward he will receive from the Lord for faithful service (“God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister”—Hebrews 6:10).