

The Position of Deacon

The church has two Biblical offices: Elders and Deacons. The early church, in Acts chapter 6:1-7, had an issue that arose, and the solution was to appoint those that would serve the needs of the congregation. Biblical scholars agree that those appointed in Acts 6 show the pattern of the Diaconal office.

Deacons are those that fulfill the qualifications of Acts 6, and as laid out in 1 Timothy 3:8-12. The primary function of the role of a deacon is to care for the physical and logistical needs of the congregation as they are appointed and assigned by the Elders, so that Elders can concentrate on their role as teachers, leaders, and shepherds.

As the needs of a congregation grow, so does the complexity of meeting those needs. We see in scripture that Deacons were appointed by the church to help fulfill the practical and logistical needs of a growing congregation, as the elders saw fit, and as the congregation approved. Deacons in the New Testament church were those that the congregation, and Elders, agreed were qualified to serve in their appointed capacity. The appointment of Deacons allows for the Elders of the congregation to, as Acts 6 says, “devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” A growing congregation needs both Biblical Elders, and Deacons, to care for the people.

An issue that can be found in many congregations is the underdevelopment of Elders, and the inflation of the role of a Deacon. In such congregations, Deacons fulfill the role of Elders by shepherding, setting direction, and teaching the congregation with an incorrect title, and therefore a different set of qualifications as outlined in scripture. This inflation of the office of Deacon to the position of an Elder or Overseer limits the functionality of both Biblical offices, as outlined in the New Testament. It does this by limiting the office of “Elder” to presumably the Lead pastor, when scripture portrays a plurality of Elders or overseers as the model for congregations, and by denying the church the practical and logistical office of Deacons.

Who can serve as a Deacon?

The qualifications for the role of Deacons as stated in the constitution of Center Point Church read as follows, “A Deacon candidate must be at least 22 years old, who has been a member in good standing of the church for at least one year. The candidate must exemplify the qualities of a Deacon as found in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.” Furthermore, the constitution outlines the duties and responsibilities of Deacons as the following:

1. They are to be zealous to guard the unity of the spirit within the church in the bonds of peace.
2. They will care for the physical and practical ministry needs of the members. This will include, but not be limited to, bereavement, hospital visitation, etc. The spirit of servanthood should mark the ministry of Deacons and all who labor for the Lord at Center Point Church.
3. Deacons may also be appointed to serve over specific ministries assigned by the Elders. Their responsibilities would include the oversight of assigned ministry and the inculcation of that ministry into the church congregation. Given the nature and role of Deacons, and considering Center Point Church has functioning qualified Elders as teachers and Shepherds, it is the position of Center Point Church, that those that fulfill the qualifications of Deacon outlined in scripture and our constitution can be appointed by the Elders and affirmed by the congregation. This applies to both qualified men and women. It is the position of the Elders that women can serve as Deacons based on the following conclusions.

1. Paul refers to Phoebe as a Deacon in the book of Romans. In chapter 16 of Romans, verses 1-2 Paul refers to Phoebe as a Deacon “Servant.” We can conclude this because the word used in Greek is “diakonos” which is a male ending to a greek word, which would have been odd to use referring to a female. We can then conclude that Paul was ascribing to her an official title, rather than speaking to her character. Additionally she is referred to as a Deacon of a specific

church, the church in Cenchrea, furthering the evidence of the title of her office.

2. There is nowhere in Scripture that forbids women to be Deacons. In 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul gives a regulation that men be teachers and those with authority over a congregation. Therefore Elders are uniquely charged with teaching, and giving oversight to the whole congregation. There is never a command within the New Testament to submit to Deacons, such language is specifically applied to Elders (1 Peter 5:5, Hebrews 13:17). Given that there is no such regulation that Paul gives over Deacons, as he does in 1 Timothy 2:12, we do not seek to limit what Scripture does not Limit.
3. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul refers to Women Deacons, and not the “Wives of Deacons.” Paul uses the same word in Greek eight other times in 1 Timothy, gynaikas, as used in 1 Timothy 3:11. It is arguable that every instance is better translated as “women” rather than “wives.” The first five instances (2:9,10,11,12,14) are clearly translated as “women” and are without dispute. To arrive at the conclusion that 3:11 is referring to “Deacon’s Wives” or “their wives” you must insert the possessive pronoun “their” into the translation, which is not present in the Greek. This coupled with the general syntax of the Greek paragraph concludes that Paul outlines the qualifications of male and female deacons. Furthermore, Paul does not give qualifications for Elders wives in the same passage. We can conclude that Paul had two lists in mind for qualification, one for Elders, and the second for Deacons, and the list for deacons included qualifications for both male and female Deacons.

Given the above stated conclusions, it is the opinion of the Elders, as seen in scripture and reflected in our church constitution, that both men and women can serve in the position of Deacon as appointed by Elders and affirmed by the congregation.