

## I. Review

A. There are five primary ministry giftings that Jesus has given to individuals in the church that build the church up in love for Jesus and for one another. These gifts are the essential and God-ordained vehicle through which the church is built up or grows up into the fullness of love and maturity: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. (Rom. 12:1-13; Eph. 4:16)

B. Critical Understandings

### Concerning the Church

1. Fellowship with Jesus (Personal)
2. Fellowship with others receiving from the church
3. Fellowship with others supplying the church
4. 7 Facets (Family, society, temple, army, bride, priesthood, and body)

### Concerning the Gifts

1. Jesus is All
2. We have access to all the gifts by the same Spirit
3. These gifts equip the whole church for ministry
4. These gifts are given by grace alone, not spiritual merit
5. Leadership is granted based upon spiritual merit alone, not upon gift
6. Only function rightly in relational unity and trust
7. Diverse yet equal

C. Government - Biblically the church is governed by a plurality of Elders who all have equal authority and leadership. Elders are set in place by Jesus through the influence of the Holy Spirit based upon proven Godly character and leadership skills.

## II. Scriptural Survey of Deacons

A. Biblical church leadership roles and functions are easily relegated to the world of unimportant or unhelpful subjects for the average believer today. However, healthy churches are a direct result of healthy Church leadership roles and functions. The lengths that our Lord went through to make sure we understood and walked out church leadership roles according to His design and desire should cause us to pause and reassess that value we give to this biblical theme.

- B. In our last session we had to remove ourselves from the cultural expectations of who or what elders are and how they function, and place a higher value on the scripture's definition rather than the cultural one. In the same way, how the scripture defines deacons and their function is very different from modern day cultural deacons.
- C. What - The word "deacon" is used in relation to the seven men called to serve the poor and widows in Acts. 6:2. Because of this single verse and context we have mostly defined deacons as those who serve the practical needs in the church. However, this is a very narrow and--in my opinion--very lacking definition of a deacon based upon the rest of scripture.
1. The greek word translated "deacon" is used 37 times in the new testament. 25 of those times it is translated "minister or minister to", 10 times it is translated "serve", and 2 times "deacon". The word literally means, "to render ministering service". (Matt. 4:11, 8:15, 10:45; Lk. 12:37; Rom. 15:25; 1 Pet. 4:10, 1 Tim. 3:8-13)
  2. What sets deacon ministry apart from other forms of ministry is that deacon's ministry is done in an authoritative manner through the commissioning of elders. In other words, deacons are ministry leaders who serve the church through the authority given to them by the elders. The title or office of deacon, biblically, has very little to do with a certain form of ministry and everything to do with being granted governmental authority to oversee or carry out ministry by the elders.
- D. Who - Deacons are ministry leaders who have been given authority in the area of ministry they operate in based upon their leadership ability and Godly character. It is my conviction based upon scripture that both men and women can be granted the authoritative office of deacon in the church. (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Tim. 3:11)
- E. Why - Even though elders are commissioned to "cover" every sphere of ministry in the church they are not meant or able to do all the ministry in the church. In light of this, elders, through the help and leadership of the Spirit, seek and select qualified individuals and commission them to lead and perform ministry on their behalf. (Acts. 6:2; Phil 1:1)