



# Deacon's Job Description

RIVERSTONE COMMUNITY CHURCH  
*of Christian Brethren*

*For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

1 Timothy 3:13

## Introduction

The New Testament says a great deal about elders and deacons. Since Riverstone Community Church aspires to be biblical, we want to ensure that everyone who serves in the Church understands what God's Word says about their role. Therefore, the primary purpose of this document is to:

- Biblical qualifications and local church expectations
- clarify the general role of elders and deacons in the church,
- specify how the role of the deacons complements the role of the elders,
- identify specific jobs for deacons in the context of Riverstone Community Church.

## A. Biblical Qualifications and Local Church Expectations for Deacons

The chief passage relating to the qualifications for deacons is 1st Timothy 3:8-12

*<sup>8</sup> In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. <sup>9</sup> They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons.*

*<sup>11</sup> In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.*

*<sup>12</sup> A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well.*

(Quoted from the New Living Translation)

The church leadership ministry, 9Marks.org explains this list using the following 9 points<sup>1</sup>:

- Dignified (v. 8):** This term normally refers to something that is honorable, respectable, esteemed, or worthy, and is closely related to "respectable," which is given as a qualification for elders (1 Tim. 3:2).
- Not double-tongued (v. 8):** Those who are double-tongued say one thing to certain people but then say something else to others, or say one thing but mean another. They are two-faced and insincere. Their words cannot be trusted, so they lack credibility.
- Not addicted to much wine (v. 8):** A man is disqualified for the office of deacon if he is addicted to wine or other strong drink. Such a person lacks self-control and is undisciplined.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.9marks.org/article/biblical-qualifications-and-responsibilities-deacons/>

- d. **Not greedy for dishonest gain (v. 8):** If a person is a lover of money, he is not qualified to be a deacon, especially since deacons often handle financial matters for the church.
- e. **Sound in faith and life (v. 9):** Paul also indicates that a deacon must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” The phrase “the mystery of the faith” is simply one way Paul speaks of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, this statement refers to the need for deacons to hold firm to the true gospel without wavering. Yet this qualification does not merely involve one’s beliefs, for he must also hold these beliefs “with a clear conscience.” That is, the behavior of a deacon must be consistent with his beliefs.
- f. **Blameless (v. 10):** Paul writes that deacons must “be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (v. 10). “Blameless” is a general term referring to a person’s overall character. Although Paul does not specify what type of testing is to take place, at a minimum, the candidate’s personal background, reputation, and theological positions should be examined. Moreover, the congregation should not only examine a potential deacon’s moral, spiritual, and doctrinal maturity, but should also consider the person’s track record of service in the church.
- g. **Godly wife (v. 11):** It is debated whether verse 11 refers to a deacon’s wife or to a deaconess. For the sake of this discussion, we will assume the verse is speaking about the qualifications of a deacon’s wife. According to Paul, deacons’ wives must “be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (v. 11). Like her husband, the wife must be dignified or respectable. Secondly, she must not be a slanderer or a person who goes around spreading gossip. A deacon’s wife must also be sober-minded or temperate. That is, she must be able to make good judgments and must not be involved in things that might hinder such judgment. Finally, she must be “faithful in all things” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10). This is a general requirement which functions similarly to the requirement for elders to be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6) and for deacons to be “blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10).
- h. **Husband of one wife (v. 12):** The best interpretation of this difficult phrase is to understand it as referring to the faithfulness of a husband toward his wife. He must be a “one-woman man.” That is, there must be no other woman in his life to whom he relates in an intimate way either emotionally or physically.
- i. **Manage children and household well (v. 12):** A deacon must be the spiritual leader of his wife and children.

In addition to the Biblical Qualifications for Deacons, Riverstone Community Church holds several Expectations for the Deacons that serve.

- a. **A higher level of involvement in the wider body of the church**  
By this it is meant that deaconship is a broader definition of service than working within a ministry, leading a ministry or even serving in several ministries. It is a concern for the entire body of the church, and an opportunity to minister to the needs of the whole church family.
- b. **A commitment to proactive service**  
This implies being sensitive to the needs of the members of the church, and having an awareness, even seeking out the needs. Further, it means strategic responsiveness to those needs - acting on them or encouraging others in meeting those needs
- c. **A demonstration of spiritual maturity**  
From the inception of the deaconship prototype in Acts 6, and from the Biblical Qualifications for deacons, it is expected that they display and utilise Spiritual Maturity, taking the lead and setting an example of Spirit lead behaviour. While the Eldership is clearly responsible for the shepherding of the church, the deacons can be expected to demonstrate a level of Spiritual maturity that should inspire and encourage other church members in their own Christian walk.

d. **A demonstration of a servant heart**

It is expected that deacons recognise the serving nature of the role, that it requires putting others before ourselves.

e. **A desire to serve in the role**

That is, the deacon should have a strong conviction that this is a calling and a passion to serve the church in this way. A deacon should be *burdened* to serve in this capacity.

f. **A commitment to set aside the time needed to fulfill the role**

The role of a deacon takes time and effort, and requires going “above and beyond” in acts of service. A deacon needs to be *able* to service in this capacity.

g. **Accountability to the leadership**

It is expected, as expanded below, that the deaconship supports the service of the eldership, and is Biblically accountable to the church eldership, allowing for the truth to be spoken in love regarding the suitability and functionality of the deaconship.

## B. The Role of Elders and Deacons in the Church

### Role of Elders

The New Testament (cf. 1 Tim. 3 & Phi. 1:1) reveals two offices in the church:

- a. Elders / Shepherds / Overseers (all used interchangeably in 1 Pet. 5:1-2).
- b. Deacons.

In order to better understand the role of deacons it is helpful to begin by describing the role of elders. According to the Scriptures the pastoral ministry of an elder is made up of four primary responsibilities.

- a. **Leading** - Firstly, the elders of a church are accountable to God for “*leading the flock*” (Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet 5:1-2 c.f. 1 Tim. 5:17).
- b. **Teaching** - Secondly, the leaders of an assembly are responsible for “*feeding the flock*” (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9; 1 Tim. 4:13; c.f. John 21:17).
- c. **Protecting** - Thirdly, elders are answerable to God for “*protecting the flock*” (Acts 20:17, 28-31) from false teaching (Tit. 1:9) and from the spread of immorality (1 The. 5:12).
- d. **Caring** - Finally church leaders are expected to be personally involved in “*caring for the needs of the flock*” (Jam. 5:14).

The primary role of the deacons is to help the elders with the fourth area of their responsibility – “*caring for the needs of the flock.*”

### Role of Deacons

The title *deacon* seems to have as many different connotations as there are churches who have them. In order to understand the role of deacons in the church it is helpful to outline *what is* and *what isn't* the biblical role of deacons in the church.

The deacons are not the:

- a. Ruling Board of the Church,
- b. Building and Property Managers,

Instead deacons are to be the:

**Assistants (lit. servants<sup>2</sup>) who come alongside the elders by giving a helping hand with meeting the practical and mercy related needs of the church.**

It is important to note that the high standard of spiritual qualifications that the New Testament requires for a Deacon (cf. 1 Timothy 3:8-16) would seem to imply that their *service* role primarily involved working with people, rather than just maintaining buildings. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the New Testament gives great importance to ministering to the needs of people with very little prominence, if any, given to the maintenance of buildings. This of course does not mean that deacons are not to help with the maintenance of church property. What it does mean, however, is that if the deacons are only handling the maintenance of church facilities, they are not yet realising the full New Testament role of a deacon. In the same way, an elder who merely attended eldership meetings, but was not regularly involved in attending to the spiritual needs of the church, would also be failing to realise the full New Testament role of an elder.

Alex Strauch states the case succinctly with the following comment. *"While some churches wrongly elevate deacons to the position of executive board members, others mistakenly reduce deacons to building managers, glorified church janitors, or sanctified grounds-keepers... My heartfelt burden is to help deacons get out of the boardroom or the building-maintenance mentality and into the people-serving mentality. Deacons, as the New Testament teaches ... are to be involved in a compassionate ministry of caring for the poor and needy."*<sup>3</sup>

### C. The Complementary Role of Elders and Deacons

Before we go on to outline specific jobs that deacons can do to assist the elders, it is helpful to understand how the roles of the elders and deacons complement one another.

Alex Strauch, in his book entitled *"Minister of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon,"* outlines the following:

- a. *The diaconate isn't a teaching office. It's imperative to note that the biblical requirement for overseers to be "able to teach" is not required of deacons (1 Timothy 3:2).*
- b. *The diaconate is not a ruling or governing office. The word overseer itself and the qualifications and duties prescribed of the overseer-elders demonstrate that overseers protect, teach, and lead the church. The term diakonos indicates an office of service, not a work of rule.*
- c. *The diaconate is plainly the subordinate of the two offices. Assuming the responsibilities of oversight-supervision of the local church, the overseers direct the deacons.*
- d. *The two offices of overseers and servants, are meant to complement one another. One is the office of pastoral oversight; the other is the office of practical service to the needy...*

*Thus the work of the deacons, the servant-officers of the church, is to oversee people's practical, material needs. This necessitated the administration of church funds. Since the*

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<sup>2</sup> "The New Testament text uses three primary words to refer to deacons: *diakonos*, which means "servant"; *diakonia*, which means "service"; and *diakoneo*, which means "to serve" ... The Greek words *diakonos*, *diakoneo*, and *diakonia* have just as wide a variety of meanings, but **in general they refer to any kind of service that supplies the need of another person.**"

John MacArthur, "Answering the Key Questions About Deacons",

<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/451020/answering-key-questions-about-deacons->

<sup>3</sup> Strauch, A. (1992). *Minister of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon* (p. 11). Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers.

*first Christians did not have buildings to maintain, the first deacons were pre-eminently people-helpers and administrators of the church's charity. They were ministers of mercy.*<sup>4</sup>

#### D. Specific Job Description for Deacons

It is important to note that the specific responsibilities of deacons are not laid out in a prescriptive manner in Scripture. Despite that many commentators have noted that Acts 6:1-6 provides a helpful apostolic example that can shed some light on the types of responsibilities that ought to be entrusted by the elders to the deacons.

It is important to note at the outset that the seven men who were chosen to serve food to the widows in Acts 6:1-6 were "deacons" only in the sense of being servants. They were not yet deacons in the later sense of officers in the church. Nevertheless, this passage is still beneficial for helping to determine specific tasks that can be carried out by deacons.

The guiding principle that can be observed from this passage is that official "servants" were appointed by the apostles to serve food daily to widows so that the apostles were freed up to focus on prayer and the ministry of the word. Thus, it appears that the job description of the deacons ought to be formulated with the aim of relieving the leaders of tasks that would divert them from their primary shepherding responsibilities.

Just as the apostles delegated administrative and service responsibilities to the Seven, so too the elders at Riverstone Community Church wish to delegate certain responsibilities to the deacons so that the elders can focus their efforts on *teaching, leading, protecting* and *caring* for the church.

In view of that the ministry of the elders will be greatly enhanced if the following service orientated responsibilities are delegated to the deacons

- a. **Mercy Ministries:** Like what took place in Acts 6:1–6 with the daily distribution to the widows, the deacons may be involved in administering funds or other assistance to the needy.
- b. **Finances:** While the elders should oversee the financial business of the church (Acts 11:30), it may be best left to the deacons to handle the day-to-day matters. This would include collecting and counting the offering, keeping records, and so on.
- c. **Administration:** Whilst the important leadership decisions that are related with Administration will be made by the elders the deacons could be entrusted with administrative tasks such as preparing the Church Bulletin, organising Church Rosters etc.
- d. **Logistics:** Deacons should be available to help in variety of ways so that the elders are able to concentrate on teaching and shepherding the church. Examples would include setting up the auditorium for meetings and packing up afterwards. Picking up people with transportation needs for meetings and dropping them home.
- e. **Facilities:** The deacons could be responsible for the maintenance of the church property. This would include making sure the property is safe and well equipped for the needs of the congregation.

Making Room for Every-Member Ministry

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<sup>4</sup> Strauch, A. (1992). *Minister of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon* (pp. 71–75). Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers.

In order to stay true to the New Testament it is important that we balance what we have been saying about the elder's and deacon's ministry roles with the parallel truth of *every-member ministry*. Although the elders and the deacons have respective roles to play in the ministry of the church, they are not the total ministry of the church. Nor are they the only *ministers* in the church. Ministry is the work of the whole church, not the work of one person, or even one or two groups of people.

Every-member ministry in the body of Christ is the New Testament ideal. The body of Christ grows to maturity in faith and love "*as each part does its work*" (Eph. 4:16) and fulfils its grace-given form of service (Eph. 4:7, 12). In view of the that it is important that the Elders and Deacons do the work that only they can do whilst at the same time equipping and facilitating others in the church to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-13).

## Conclusion

Whilst there is a need for the Deacons to assist with the maintenance of church facilities it is hoped that the role of the Deacons at Riverstone Community Church would be more than that of glorified *maintenance men*. At the same time, however, since the New Testament charges the elders with the task of leading and shepherding the church it is not intended for the role of the deacons to become a *ruling body* or even a *second tier of church leadership*.

**Rather, it is hoped that the deacons would primarily be *people helpers* and *administrators* of the church's charity. In this way the Deacons would become the *hands and feet* of the elders in areas of mercy ministries and practical concern so that the elders are freed up to focus their energies on shepherding the spiritual needs of the church.**