

LESSON 1

FACING THE ISSUES

(Read pages 8-12)

Have you completed reading *The New Testament Deacon* in its entirety? If not, please read the book before doing lesson two.

1. Before reading *The New Testament Deacon*, what was (or is) your idea of a church deacon?

2. According to the preface entitled, “Facing The Issues,” what basic, foundational problem exists with the way that many churches think about the deacons' ministry? What much bigger problem is this one merely a symptom of?

3. This problem has given rise to some unbiblical (and unhelpful) models of what the deacon ministry is. What are they and what are some harmful results of them?

WHAT DO DEACONS DO?
(Read pages 25-34; 71-76)

4. To be effective for God, deacons must clearly understand their identity and function in the body. How does the Greek word for deacon, *diakonos*, help you better understand your work and identity? (See Professor Cranfield's two quotations on *diakonos* on pages 48 and 73. Do you understand what he is saying?)

5. In specific terms, what does the Acts 6:1-6 account teach you about deacons' duties?

6. Since all Christians are called to serve one another and to use their spiritual gifts, why does the local church need the office of deacon? (See pages 42,43.)

7. From the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-12, what do we learn about what deacons ought to be and do and what do we learn about what they ought not to be and do? (See also pages 89,90.)

8. What does the Bible mean by the word *mercy*? What do we mean by the term *mercy ministries*? (See pages 154-159.)

9. What specifically does your local church do in the way of mercy ministries?

Warning:

Thomas S. Goslin, II writes, "A recent study of 50 congregations indicates that more church dollars are being spent for utilities and correspondingly fewer for benevolences and pastoral services" (*Church Without Walls*, [Pasadena: Hope Publishing House, 1984], p. 35,36).

If your congregation owns a church building, you must be aware that building maintenance and costs can absorb all your time, thought, and money. In most churches where the deacons are responsible for the church building, building maintenance and supervision inevitably consumes most of their time and money.

Therefore, I recommend that the elders of the church require the deacons to set up a separate building maintenance committee to be responsible for the building. Of course, in a small church some of the deacons or elders may have to serve on that committee. But the sooner the building committee can operate without them the better. Do not allow your diaconate to become simply a building maintenance committee or church finance committee.

10. What do you think about the above counsel? (See page 157.) How might this recommendation be implemented in your church?

Assignments:

1) Establish a widows' list and review it regularly. By either calling or visiting, collect pertinent information regarding the welfare of every widow in your local church. Keep this information on file and confidential.

2) Establish a list of those who are chronically sick or disabled and review it regularly. Care for these people will involve many helpers and require effective follow-up.

3) Establish a list of all who are unable to attend services because of physical or emotional problems. Regular contact with shut-ins needs to be maintained. They should receive tapes of the Sunday morning messages and church bulletins. Through visits, calls, and special services held in their homes, they will know that they are not

Scripture Memory Assignment:
James 1:27