

Unto What Were You Ordained

The Ministry of Deacon

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

Responding to the commandment of God, Moses set apart in the wilderness the men of the Tribe of Levi to serve in the Tabernacle (Numbers 8:16 – 22).

They were to serve under Aaron and his sons by serving in the courts, watching over the tabernacle that no unclean thing would desecrate the tabernacle.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

They were to be custodians and transporters of the Tabernacle and its equipment. With the end of the Mosaic dispensation and the rise of the early Christian Church, the need for ritualism decreased and the demand of a better ministry arose.

As the New Testament Church grew, the needs of the Saints became more diverse, particularly as the church reached out beyond Judaism.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

The Restored Church follows the same pattern of priesthood established in the New Testament.

The demands for increased ministry – particularly a temporal and preparatory ministry, caused the continued need for the office of Deacon that fulfills the care of the body of Christ.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

In the sixth chapter of Acts, we find a situation arise due to the growth of the church and dispute broke out between the Hebrew and Grecian saints. The Grecians believed that their widows were being neglected in their daily needs (Acts 6:1).

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

The Twelve called the church together and told them that they could not leave the word of God and serve tables (verse 2).

They called for the brethren of the church to provide the names of seven men who were of honest report and full of the Holy Ghost.

Those seven men, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas were ordained to the Office of Deacon to serve the temporal needs of the church.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

Even as the ministry of the Deacon was to be a temporal and preparatory ministry, it nonetheless requires a stringent faith and testimony of one befitting the service to both God and mankind.

We find in I Timothy 3, such requirements expressed as necessary for holding this office.

Likewise the deacons must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses will. For they that have used the office of a deacon will purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

In the Restored Church, the Aaronic Order as a whole, reflects the function order as found in the New Testament. With the coming forth of the ministry of John the Baptist, the external focus of the Aaronic Order began to change to the internal or Spiritual aspects of faith.

This pattern of the preparatory gospel was renewed with the Restoration of the Church in 1829, when John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery and ordained them to the Aaronic ministry of “repentance and baptism, and the remission of sins.”

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

As the Restored Church grew, so did the specific definitions and delineations of the offices and mission of the lesser priesthood.

It is through the revelations given in the early days of the Restoration, that we find greater understanding of the Aaronic Order and in this lesson, the office of Deacon.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

Latter-day revelations given to the church early on, specifies the requirements of the office of Deacon.

Just as in the early days of the Christian era, the Aaronic priesthood and in particular, the office of Deacon continues to be a potent factor in the ministry of the church.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

In Doctrine and Covenants 17:11a – f, we find these required ministry of the Deacon:

Watch over and strengthen the church

See that there is no iniquity in the church such as hardness, lying, backbiting, or evil speaking

See that the church meet together often

See that all the member do their duty

Take the lead of meetings in the absence of Elder, Priest or Teacher

Warn, expound, exhort, teach and invite all to come unto Christ

(D&C 17:12a-b) Every Deacon is to be ordained according to the gifts and calling of God unto him; and he is to be ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost which is in the one who ordains him.

The Deacon

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

The office of Deacon is a necessary appendage belonging to the lesser priesthood, which priesthood was confirmed upon Aaron and his sons (83:5b).

Deacons are to be standing ministers to the church, meaning that their ministry is to be focused upon the branch in which they reside bringing that guidance and ministry previously given in D&C 17.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

Deacons are also to provide guidance to those within the same office as a quorum.

A Deacon will preside over twelve other Deacons as the president of the Deacons, to sit in council with them, and teach them their duty – edifying one another, as it is given according to the covenants (D&C 104:38).

Additionally, in the absence of any other office, the Deacon may preside over a branch if chosen and sustained by the vote of the branch (D&C 120:2a).

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

According to the scriptures given, the office of Deacon is first a spiritual calling. It is not an office simply relegated to a custodial or temporal role.

Those holding the office of Deacon must needs have a deep faith, a constant relationship with his Heavenly Father and be mindful that when one serves even the “least of these,” He is fulfilling a sacred calling.

Scriptural Foundation of the Office of Deacon

Like each of the Aaronic offices, the Deacon is a watchman and a shepherd looking after the needs of his flock – whether that need is for food and sustenance, or spiritual guidance, the Deacon is the first line of response.

In later lessons, we will look at the specific gifts and talents required of a Deacon in fulfilling his office and calling.

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Spiritual Foundations of the Deacon's Ministry

Spiritual Foundation of the Office of Deacon

The Spiritual function of the Deacon is as an appendage to the Aaronic Order to be a watchman to the Branch in which he resides. As a watchman, his primary goal is to work in tandem with the Office of Teacher to assist in the spiritual and temporal needs of the branch.

Doctrine and Covenants 17:11

Spiritual Foundation of the Office of Deacon

Doctrine and Covenants 17:11 provides a list of ministry that the Deacon should be engaged in as he functions in his office. As a watchman, the Deacon is to watch over the Church and to be in the body in order to strengthen them.

The Deacon is to guard against iniquity within the church; that there is no hardness of heart within its members that would involve lying, backbiting, or evil speaking within its membership.

The Deacon is to encourage the body of Christ to do their duty and to meet together often and to assist the other offices of priesthood in their duties.

Spiritual Foundation of the Office of Deacon

The Deacon is to teach the gospel as part of his responsibilities as a member of the Aaronic Order. A good Deacon is always ready to preach and teach the preparatory Gospel to those who desire to know the foundations on which the Church of Jesus Christ is built upon.

The preparatory Gospel is teaching Faith, Repentance, Baptisms of water and the Spirit, Resurrection, Eternal Judgment, Stewardship, and the Ordinances of the Church so that people may have a good foundation on which to build their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Foundation of the Office of Deacon

As with all appendages of the Aaronic Order, the Deacon can request assistance within his office and calling by appealing to the Heavenly Father to send Angelic ministry to assist in his responsibilities.

Doctrine and Covenants 104:10 states that the power and authority of the Aaronic Priesthood is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels. The Deacon can call upon the Angels to minister in situations where he cannot due to the limitations of his office. For instance, if a Deacon is ministering in a home and someone within the home is sick, the Deacon can call upon the Angels to administer to the sick.

Spiritual Foundation of the Office of Deacon

As previously stated, the Deacon is to be a watchman to the branch. To be a watchman, the Deacon needs to be always among the body of Christ. His ministry within the branch requires him to be active in all parts of branch life.

He needs to always be among the Saints when they worship, and when they are socializing. When the Saints worship, the Deacon is responsible for maintaining a physical or spiritual environment that contributes to the experience of worship. When the Saints are socializing, the Deacon needs to be watchful to make certain there is no one left out of the experience.

Spiritual Foundation of the Office of Deacon

An important aspect of the Deacon's spiritual and temporal ministry is found in the homes of the Saints. Spiritually, the Deacon is to teach, expound, exhort, warning, and inviting those within the home to a fuller relationship with Jesus Christ.

Temporally, the Deacon is to minister to the needs of the needy, the widows, and the fatherless to meet their physical needs. The Deacon needs to have full knowledge in all the law, but most particularly the financial law and Stewardship law. Knowing these things, strengthens the Body of Christ.

Unto What Were You Ordained

The Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

The disciples asked Jesus, “When did we see thee naked and clothed thee? When did we see thee hungry and fed thee?” One of the central teachings of Jesus Christ was found in this exchange with His disciples. That is to care for the poor, the widowed and the orphaned. In the church today this is called “oblation.” Meaning, that the physical needs must be met, before the spiritual needs can be taken care of. It is part of the Deacon’s responsibility to determine such needs and to administer the needed relief.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

The Aaronic Order, and in particular, the Deacon should always be aware of the needs of the men and women of the Church. In knowing, the Deacon should always be able to tell the difference between their real needs and their wants and self-interests.

Administering oblation is much more than providing funds to those in need, but it is necessary to provide the understanding of the financial law and the management of one's own stewardship so that the present need can be more permanently resolved.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

“Deacons are a part of the financial arm of the church. The Deacon is not only to be able to teach the financial law but are to be agents of that law by collecting tithes, offerings and funds for the general church operation. As such, they then become agents as stated earlier, to dispense money to the poor. As such, one of the most spiritual bodies of men in the church ought to be the Deacons.”

This statement was made by the Church’s Prophet Frederick M. Smith.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

Because the Deacon is such a part of the financial law of the Church, he often is chosen to be the treasurer of the local branch. As such, he is an elected officer of the branch.

As Treasurer, the Deacon is to be beyond reproach in the execution of his office. He is to give wise counsel to the branch as the budgetary officer. He must keep strict account of the funds coming into the branch and the funds going out of the branch and the knowledge of the purposes of the funds. Accuracy is imperative if the Deacon is to be the branch Treasurer.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

Even if the Deacon is not sustained as the treasurer within the branch, he is called to become informed in the field of church finance. He should know the church budget and know each account within the budget and its solvency.

The Deacon should also know how many Tithing Statements are filed in his branch, how many local contributors and how many tithe payers there are within the branch. The Deacon should be able to give sound family financing advice to the Branch in keeping with the financial law and the stewardship law.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

Understanding the Spiritual ministry of the Deacon as previously discussed, it needs to be said that the Deacon is also responsible for the physical aspects of the church.

The building in which the Saints worship, must be maintained. This is part of the Deacon's responsibility. Not necessarily that the duty falls solely to him, but rather that the Deacon needs to be in the forefront of maintaining the physical plant as the central point of contact.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

Anytime the Saints are in the Church, there needs to be an environment conducive to worship and/or fellowship. The Deacon needs to have his hands in the ongoing maintenance of the facility, including heating, ventilation, and lighting.

The Deacon need to know where all these items are kept and maintained. He needs to know where water shutoffs are, where the circuit breakers are, and which ones operate which electrical need within the building.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

In short, the Deacon needs to be the one who maintains or sees to the cleanliness and order within the building and its grounds. He needs to be aware of who is in the building at all time and for what purpose they are there.

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

YOUR CHURCH HOME

“As we go down through the years, our church homes become hallowed by the memories of all our rich associations with Divinity and with those of precious faith.

To the church we come for instruction and for worship. To it we come in the gladness of youth to take the vows of marriage and to pledge our fidelity to each other. With glowing pride, we bring there our first born that the elder may receive him in the name of the Him who said, ‘Suffer little children.’ (continued next page)

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

To the church we come to covenant with God in the waters of baptism and to join with our fellow men in the purposes of establishing His Kingdom. To the church we come for confirmation, for ordination, and for administration. There from month to month, we surround the table of our Lord to remember Him and to renew our covenant with Him. Thither we bring the habitat of our loved ones when the beckoning finger of God has called their spirits home. (continued)

Temporal Ministry of the Deacon

Through all the varied lights and shadows of our life, the church becomes for each of us a personal hall of memory and in it we find our deepest joy and abiding peace.

In all these experiences the skilled ministry of the Deacon is essential.”

- Apostle C. George Mesley