

Deacons (1)—Purpose of Deacons:
to Free Up Public and House-to-House Ministry of Prayer and Word
2022.04.17 Morning Sermon in **Acts 5:42–6:7**



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Main idea: The Lord gave the church deacons to free up the ministers of the Word for prayer and preaching and teaching, both in public and from house to house.

⁴²And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

⁶¹Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ²Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

⁵And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

⁷Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Introduction: What is a deacon?

1. The Purpose of the Deacon (free the ministers of the Word for their work)

- a. All must speak the Word to some extent. (cf. ch 7; 8:26–40; Eph 4:11–16; 1Pet 3:15). As the Holy Spirit shows by the examples of Stephen and Philip, the deacons should expect to be called upon by God to speak that Word whose ministry they are working to facilitate. The primary fellowship of the church is in speaking the truth. All believers should always be ready to give a defense. The church should be a little seminary!
- b. But there is a [M]inistry of the [W]ord that the Lord has established (v4). There is that particular thing that is called “the” ministry of the Word here. It is the thing for the freeing up of which others, who are expected to be able to speak the Word, do their tasks.
 - i. In public (v42) for spreading (v7). This was that ministry in Solomon’s porch in which all of the apostles shared, but none of the rest dared join them; there is a public ministry of evangelism in which ministers of the Word are to engage (5:12–13, cf. 2Tim 4:5). When the minister is weighed down with other duties, evangelism will suffer.
 - ii. In every house (v42). Every household is in its own circumstances, and every head of household in his own place in understanding and maturity. It is the Spirit’s method that every household receive its own customized ministry of the Word (v42, cf. 20:20, 28).
 - iii. Not only the Word believed and applied, but *especially* prayed (v2, v4). The ministry of prayer is named first in v4. This is an aspect of that teaching and preaching ministry—not only in private intercession but in public and house-to-house leadership. It takes such effort that overseeing distribution to the widows must be set aside for the preparation and practice of this ministry.
 1. The necessity of instruction in biblical praying. The Lord has put an entire prayer book in His Word (Psalms) and filled all of the other books with example prayers as well. There is a right and wise way of having prayer shaped by Scripture, and it is understood that a minister of the Word will teach it (cf. Luk 11:1–13).
 2. The use of biblical praying *in every place*. Instruction in prayer is a central component of the “every house” ministry of the apostles, because this is a unique calling of the men in those houses (1Tim 2:8). Not that they would be the only ones who ever pray, but that in the gathered context, they would lead. This is how the rest of the gathering—whether family or church—grows in praying biblically.
 3. The glory of biblical praying in every instance. Prayer engages all three Persons uniquely and specifically, since it enlists the Spirit’s help (cf. Rom 8:26–27) and embraces complete forgiveness by coming through the Great High Priest (cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 4:14–16, 7:25). All of our praying is done in weakness, but we cannot expect that a form of prayer that is not shaped by Scripture is a laying hold of these promises and realities. If the Lord has

established for us instruction in prayer, and leaders in prayer, then part of availing ourselves of His help is to follow His way in this.

iv. To these, the minister of the Word is to give himself *continually* (v4). He is to lead what the world (and much of the “church” around us) would call an unbalanced life.

2. The Work of the Deacon (oversee whatever else is needed)

- a. Receive complaints (v1). Many sinners means many complaints, even when things are going well in the church. Even when the number of disciples is multiplying. Even when the people are full of the Spirit and of generosity from the Spirit. The deacons are the new complaint department of the apostolic church. The ministers must be freed not only from the time that it takes to answer complaint but from the toll that it takes upon them to be pressured to do as pleases the people rather than as pleases God. They are to see that the Word be taught so that all things can be continually formed by the Word and reformed by the Word.
- b. Make decisions. But it is not expected that they will merely hear the complaints. They must have liberty and authority to do something about these complaints. They have decision-making power. Here, for instance, they would make new (and adapting) policy for the collection of funds, the procurement of food with those funds, and the distribution of what was collected.
- c. Facilitate service (v3). “This business”—*chreia*, whatever is needed; in this case, serving “tables” (v2). The widows were not the only ones who would have to get their substance in this way. The apostles themselves must come to be dependent upon the distribution, if they were not already so. And there are many other things that become needed to facilitate readiness for the gatherings of the church and then within the gathering itself.

3. The Qualifications of the Deacon (v3)

- a. Men. The male specific word. This does not surprise, since we have already determined that it is a position of authority. Women can and must be involved in the labor of the service and even given discretion to an extent that the deacons think wise. But it is male-overseen (cf. 1Tim 2:12).
- b. Witness (reputation of fruit). The word “witness” can be used in two ways here. One is that their character testifies of their faith. The other is that others testify of their character. The latter is primarily in view, but it does not exist without the former. The church testifies of their character because their character is a testimony of their faith. So, they must first of all be men of sound doctrine, or otherwise whatever other good is in them is not a testimony of the fruit of saving faith but of the marvelous common grace of God that can give many an unbeliever and heretic a measure of decent conduct. But the next term brings more specificity.
- c. Full of the Holy Spirit (source and nature of fruit). This makes it clear that the Lord Himself is choosing the deacons, because He not only describes the qualifications of the deacon, but He is the One who produces those qualifications in the men that He is giving to the church as a diaconate. It also helps us with what the “witness” is of: not only sound doctrine about Jesus as both Lord and Christ, but then also those particular fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, crucified fleshliness of lust or covetousness, humble, not provocative (cf. Gal 5:22–26)—as well as diligence, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2Pet 1:5–7).
- d. Wisdom (track record of application of that fruit). Wisdom is skill in practice; it takes that good doctrine and good character and exercises it in dependence upon the Lord, as directed by the Lord, with outcomes that are blessed of the Lord. In 1Tim 3: 10–13, we learn that this is first shown true in their own house, with their own wives and children and households (v11–12), and then it is separately tested in which test they must be found blameless (v10).

4. The Ordination of the Deacon

- a. Training of all by the ministers of the Word to produce the character (v42, 4). If we note that there was no training period in Acts 6, we are greatly mistaken. The entire church was being trained in the doctrine and character and wisdom that the Holy Spirit was using that training to produce in them.
- b. Instruction of all by the ministers of the Word in the qualifications (v2). The entire multitude was summoned to receive this new instruction. The apostles were ministering in every house and hopefully had some sense of every man, but assessing witness and blamelessness is a task of all, not a few.
- c. Seeking out by all and choosing by all (v3). There should be a desire by the members of the church for good officers of the church. These are gifts of the resurrected Lord by means of the poured out Spirit. It’s an active word that usually means “look after” or “visit” but has a more dictionary-definition of making careful investigation.

- d. Approval by the ministers of the Word (v6). The people who had been setting property before the apostles now set persons before them!
- e. Prayer. Acknowledgement of God's superintendence and seeking His blessing. This must be presumed to have been the case the entire time, but even those who are consistently conscientious must not be presumptuous. The apostles were praying continually, but they make their dependence and desire explicit with specific prayer for the specific occasion.
- f. Laying on of hands (after prayer!). The laying on of the hands is not a prayer act, but rather an ordaining act—the official transfer of authority and setting apart for ministry. The hand of man was upon them visibly, but it was an indication that the hand of God would be upon them and through them invisibly but not therefore less really; in fact, more really!

5. The Success of the Deacon

- a. Measured by smoothness of operation of the church's serving God and one another. The implication in v7 is that it worked. Complaints were settled. The worship of the church, and the shared everyday life of the church continued smoothly.
- b. Reflected in strengthened ministers of the Word and multiplied ministry of the Word. Again, the implication is that because by the apostles now being free to do *continually* what they were determined to do in v4, the Lord gave the result in v7.
- c. Reflected in the spread of the Word
 - i. In every house (don't forget!). The spreading of the Word of God is not limited to the particular effects mentioned in v7. We must remember that part of the ministry that was being facilitated was that ministry described in v42.
 - ii. In multiplication. A church that was already much multiplied now multiplied even more. To them who were faithful in much, more was given. Phase one was now completed of the "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth" project.
 - iii. In conversion of "hard cases" (cf. 5:31). The apostles had announced forgiveness to those who were guilty of the blood of Jesus. Especially the priestly sect. Now, after the delay of the difficulty that had arisen in between, a great number of those very priests came to the faith. Was it because Levites were collectors and distributors to the poor (and to the Levite) under the Sinaitic covenant? Perhaps. But ultimately, it was because it is the Holy Spirit gives conversion, and He is pleased to honor His appointed means. And sometimes, He is pleased to make unusually great displays of His saving power, which He does in this instance!

Conclusion: May the Lord grant His Spirit's gathering in, growing, and perfecting His saints among us! May He so give us deacons and so use their ministry that the church would serve Him and one another well in all things, that the ministry of the Word would be strengthened, and the church grow in every way!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Our God. We praise you and thank you for the displays of your glory to us, that are in all of the creation with especially that display that you have made of yourself and your son, our Lord Jesus. And how he, who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead who ascended and has poured out your spirit.

So that all that he does in your church by the work of your spirit would be to the praise of your glorious. Grace, we come now to offer to you the reading and the hearing of your word preached so that you might be glorified by the fact that it is your word and you might be glorified by our yielding underneath it, as you decree to us as King.

What we are to believe and what we are to do, We pray also that your spirit would stir up faith that the word that we hear would profit us. And that part of that prophet would be renewing our minds conforming us to Christ so that we would be different from the world and the glorifying of Jesus by the difference that he makes even now in the lives of those whom you redeem and in the shared corporate life of your church, that you have set apart.

So, come we pray by your spirit. And declare Lord. Jesus, your father's name to us, whom you are not ashamed to call your brethren. Even though you are both God and resurrected ascended and thrown glorified, man, come by your Spirit and help us in the hearing of your word, read, and preached.

We pray even in your own matchless name. Amen, Let us rise. As we come first to hear the word of God read.

Acts 5 verse 42. Through 6 verse 7. These are the words of God and daily in the temple. And in every house, They did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Now, in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution than the 12 summoned.

The multitude of the disciples and said It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren seek out from among you seven. Men of good reputation full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the work and the saying please the whole multitude and they chose Stephen.

A man full of faith and the Holy Spirit and Philip procurus Nicanor. Timon Parminus and Nicholas across the light from Antioch whom they set before the apostles. And when they had prayed, they laid hands on the, Then the Word of God spread And the number of the disciples multiplied.

Greatly in Jerusalem and a great. Many of the priests or obedient to the faith. Since this reading of God's inspired an errant authoritative, sufficient and effective word. Praise be to his name. Please be seated.

What is a deacon? It's an important question in the life of and many of you are thinking this congregation because we are seeking and training and looking for deacons. But my first thought was our denomination. Our church, the associated, the associate Reformed Presbyterian Church for we are in season, in which that Reformation that God was pleased to bring to our church beginning in the 80s.

And even continuing. Until this day is about to touch. The question of what is a deacon who should be one, what are they to be doing? And so forth, the southern or mostly southern Associate. Reform Presbyterian Church held to a biblical form and use of the Office of Deacon, much longer than her northern sister.

The RPCNA, the RPCNA being in northern church, was caught up in social activism starting already in the middle of the 1800s and out of that came, both the redefinition of the office to be something and they used the term anachronistically, but as shorthand so that you can know quickly what I mean.

The so that the office will be something of the social justice arm of the church and open in egalitarian fashion to not just men, but also to women, the ARP following, as it did about a decade behind. The southern Presbyterian Church, the ARP being more of a Scottish denomination following a decade behind.

So every deformation of this southern Presbyterians happened about 10 years later among the associate Reformed Presbyterians until in the 1960s. 196 state the ARP too, redefined the Office of Deacon, and brought women into that office. And now, those questions, what is the Office of Deacon and more broadly, what is the doctrine of the ordination of a deacon and who is qualified for that office?

And what should they be doing? The Synod actually has formed committees to study in order to reform many of you being as impatient in spirit, as your pastor say, well, if a majority of the men already know what's, right? Why don't we just have a vote and change it?

And the answer is because as God does for us this morning in the sermon, these changes are to be made, not by force of will of a majority, but by the word of God, convincing and bringing the church with one mind to Reformation. And so we have this morning and perhaps for another and maybe two the content before you if you happen, no one got a visitor's bag.

So you don't have the longer outline. But if you happen to be following along from the link on the website, you can see that the content before you is at least three and perhaps as many as eight or nine sermons worth, There is much here for our instructions so that we will not just make a change in the rule, But that we will receive from the Lord Jesus independence upon His Spirit that which we are to do, and by which he grows His church, he edifies his people, He transforms not just congregations but every one of our households, by the application of his word, He multiplies His disciples, he converts hard cases, and brings in the kind of reformation and revival.

That genuine believers always desire. But in the history, thus far of the church have rarely gotten to see. Now if that is what God is doing with the office of deacon, as we hope to see from his word in this portion of it that we have just had read in your hearing.

If that is what God is doing in the apostolic church and we desire, apostolic revival. Then this is the way that we need to come in to a right renovation reformation and God helping us, not just the life of the AARP. But yes, the life of Hopewell ARP Church that he would usher in when you season of revival, the work of his spirit.

So there is a great deal here to be heard in this passage. And we've organized it under these headings, first of all, the purpose of the deacon and then the work of the deacon in order to pursue that purpose and then the qualifications of the deacon. What kind of men?

The Apostles said to have set apart in order to do that portion of the work that would be assigned to them. So that the purpose that God gives in this passage would be fulfilled. And then the ordination of the deacon, how that kind of man was identified and set apart and installed Installed to the work.

And finally, the fact that, yes, God, did bless this. The success of the deacon how the spirit describes to us, the success, the fruit that came out of this new office in the church, the diakonet and therefore drawing from that description of the success understanding, what we hope to see God do as we seek to follow Him and the instruction, he gives us here First.

Then the purpose of the deacon, The purpose of the deacon verse 42, and daily in the temple. And in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Now, in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplying, their arose, a complaint against the Hebrews, by the Hellenists because their widows, we're neglected in the daily distribution.

Then the 12 summoned, the multitude of the disciples and said it is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God. They're doing a work in that is described in verse 42 that they then describe in verse 4 as but we will give ourselves continually to prayer. And to the ministry of the word, The work that they are doing in public and from house to house and you can hear if you know, your Bible.

Well, the Apostle Paul saying the same thing about his apostolic ministry in Ephesus and the ministry that was then to be carried on by the elders in Ephesus, the work that they were doing in public and from house to house was something that they could not leave off wood.

Not leave off, They needed to be freed for the ministry of the Word, This teaching and preaching, verse 42, and prayer. And ministry of the word verse 4 of chapter 6. Now, we must have. We must make a caveat here because there are some who say, okay Apostles and then elders after them like in Ephesus.

And in every church, as the transition is made, from the apostolic Church to the future generations of the church, Elders of the ones, who minister the word, and deacons are the ones who sign the checks, and nobody else better read or say anything about the word of God to anyone.

I don't want actually says it that way, but that's what's communicated. And sometimes believed That would be a great mistake. Two of these seven deacons that we see ordained in our passage, go on to do some ministry of teaching. Stevens comes in the first Peter 3 kind of form.

He has to give an answer for the hope that his in him. In fact, he gives such a good answer in his home church that they can't refute it and whenever we get to the following passage, we'll see that they get so upset that they frame him for what in their circumstance was capital crimes and he gets asked one question, his trial are these things.

So and he goes on to preach for more than 50 verses. And his preaching is basically the content of the apostolic message that he has heard up. Until this point, Philip, we will see in the last section of chapter, 8 is the one whom the Lord uses for the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, and probably the planting of the church in Africa.

And so it is not that the apostles would be, the only ones who would speak the word rather, it would be that the apostles and the elders after them could give themselves exclusively to the ministry of the Word. So not only those Speak the word, but there is something that the Scripture calls here, the apostles call here, the ministry of the Word to which the elders of the church are, especially to give themselves and such a continual fashion that they literally should not be bothered by the things that are the purview of the diakonet and elders or a session or apostles who have to mess with the diagonal ministry or maybe have to isn't the only way that happens who take it upon themselves to mess with the diaconal ministry.

In some cases are actually contradicting, the purpose of the diagonant in the first place.

If Stephen and Philip are to be speaking the truth to the council on Stephens Park or the Ethiopian eunuch on Phillips part, then we need that ministry of the word from which they learn how to understand and teach the Word, all the more and it's not just they who are to speak the truth.

Indeed every part of the body is to be speaking. The truth in love We love to quote verse 15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into an old things into him. Who is the head Christ? And it is true that it must be in love and for the next chapter so of Ephesians he's going to talk a lot about the love in which a congregation ought to walk with one another.

But the point of verse 15 in chapter 4 of Ephesians is not the manner in which they speak. But the matter of which they speak. Because even when we love one another, even when we've been converted even when we've been joined together as a body, every member of which every joint of which is to supply strength to the rest of the body and every member of that body having a share or a part in how God builds up and how Christ builds up the whole of the body into himself, even when the body is assembled that way left to itself apart from the teaching offices of the church, you end up with a form of that refrain and judges and everyone believed and spoke what was right in their own eyes.

And there were no apostles, prophets, evangelists and Pastor teachers in Israel, But that is not how Jesus has left his church. Jesus rose again from the dead Jesus, ascended on high. Jesus took his seat at the right hand of majesty and he gave gifts among men. What gifts apostles prophets evangelists.

Pastor teachers, why? Because the saints had to be equipped for the service, the ministry that each one of them would be called upon to do for one another, so that the body of Christ would be built up so that they would come to the unity of the faith. They would believe in the same things that would have the same doctrine diversity of person and personality and origin of ethnicity.

These are things that glorify God in the church when they come to unity of faith and theology. Diversity of theology is not a value in Scripture. It is something that literally the office of elder and the office of deacon in order to free the elders as designed to thwart and stop.

Because there are these waves and winds. They all come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. What a ministry? Why? And how verse 14 that we should no longer, be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

Some of you see how your children are as you teach them through family worship and they have great questions sometimes and crazy ideas. Many of the times Every new thing they hear they think, oh, I just learned something new or I just discovered that something I've been thinking was wrong and they just swing back and they suddenly redefine everything that we should say or do in light of this new thing that they think that they have learned, and it might be something they have learned.

That is true. And they're just disproportionate or they might have gotten it wrong well together and you teach your child and over the course of their lives. There's less tossing wide because they are stabilized in the truth of the scripture, as a whole, and the spirit interpreting, his own word from other.

Passages keeps them from that instability. Why? Because they are members of the church and they are coming into a new generation and season, in which they will be the adult members of the church. Some of whom will be called to the office. Some boys, grown men of whom will be called to the office of elder and Deacon of the Lord will use to stabilize the next generation of children.

But if you don't have a functional deaconate, freeing the elders for the ministry that they're called to, to unify the theology of the church, according to the Word of God. And if you don't have elders, fulfilling the ministry for which the deacons were to free them. What happens? You have an entire congregation of children, the Google their theology, they buy whatever the most popular book is or the weirdest book, is because it catches their interest, and they don't have that stability of the knowledge of the whole, and every new thing, they hear tosses them to and fro that we should no longer, be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men.

In the cunning craftiness, of deceitful plotting, yes, there are people out there, undermining the truth and they sell themselves, not as heretics trying to gain a heretic following, But as the ones who are exposing the lies of those apostles, much of the Apostle, Paul's ministry in the New Testament was answering those who came in after and undercut him turning and deceitful craftiness.

But speaking the truth in love. Now, you know what verse 15 means? Don't you the ministry of the elders, the pastor teachers, and therefore, the ministry of the diakonet whose purpose is to free up, the ministers of the word for the capital T ministry, capital T of the word, the ministry of the deacons is so that by the ministry of the ministers of the word, Everyone will be able to minister.

The same word to one another and will not have the constant debates and the wrangling, But the reminding of one, another of those truths that we hold in common and the exposition the flushing out of those things and the planning of how to live in those things. So that when we have theological discussion, it's not in the tension of waves tossing, true and fro but it is in the force of a river.

Carrying everyone forward with life, because we're in the same place, theologically no wonder the apostles didn't want to leave the Word of God. They had been in the temple every day. We know that that's the ministry. That was outward evangelistic. Remember back in verses 12 and 13 in chapter 5.

Through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord and Solomon's porch yet. None of the rest dared. Joined them. So there is a ministry that is happening in the temple court in the area that is called Solomon's porch in the temple court where they are preaching and teaching Jesus.

As the Christ, they do not cease that and yet none of the rest of the gathering church. At this point is joining them in that and even without the people, even without the rest of the church there. The people esteem them, highly and are listening to them in this outward evangelistic ministry.

So, that's the first part of this ministry of the word that is being freed up by the elders. This in public, in the temple verse 42 and no wonder then when we get to verse 7 of our tax chapter 6, verse 7, the Word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied, greatly in Jerusalem, a great many of the priests We're obedient to the faith because the most frequent traffickers of the temple would be those priests who come and go to their work all the time and on their way in and on their way out, they hear Jesus Christ.

The Lord being preached to them by the apostles. So the first part of that ministry that is now found in the eldership and the ministers of the Word is that public evangelistic ministry. When the minister, when the ministers, if we understand what an elder is properly, and we won't get all the way into that.

Although we've done some now When the ministers are weighed down with other duties, evangelism is the first thing to suffer because there's that in every house of verse 42 and from house to house of x 20 verse 20, that needs to be done. And yet, in addition to it, the ministers of the word, the elders should be having a public ministry, finding the the places where they can get some traffic, and some hearing, and proclaiming Jesus as the Christ to people who have thus far been rejecting him and even rejecting him hotly maliciously.

Murderously. Those are the ones who are being targeted at least in verse 7 of our passage. So there's that ministry of the word that is in public. There's that ministry of the word that is in every house. Now, I grew up in a narrow little slice of well, I don't remember too much of the late 70s.

I was a closest child but I was three years and two months old when the 70s ended, But in the 80s when China was opening up a little bit and we would hear what was going on in China and then onto the late 80s and 90s and which the Iron Curtain was was coming down and we would hear.

And we heard about cell churches that were gathered in houses. And so the church that I grew up in and I with them read that into the New Testament, ah, cell churches, that's a New Testament model. And yet the in the public is not just outwards, there would be gatherings of the church.

The church is described as a gathering. These are households. These are families. The basic unit of the New Testament church just as the basic unit of the Old Testament church just as if we had time to to re-look and consider in Genesis 1 in chapter 2, the basic unit of humanity is the household.

Now people within a household have individuality but the imaging of God and the walking with God and obedience to God, service of God is done by household. Now all these households are different, they're in different places, a different circumstances, apply to each household, and the head of each house is in a different place in his understanding.

And in his Christian maturity, some of them have just gotten converted but knew a lot of Old Testament. Some of them were really not very good Jews. And so there's a lot of knowledge that has to be made up now that they're converted and they realize that the whole Bible belongs to Christ.

And so the apostles have this ministry from house to house. That is the spirit's method that every household in addition to attending the gatherings of the church should receive its own customized ministry of the word. This is why the Holy Spirit has raised up elders and acts chapter 20.

When the what's happening in the course of the book of Act at the time is that the Ephesians are not going to get to see Paul's face again. In fact, it doesn't take place in In Ephesus. It takes place in my lead us so that Paul can continue making a beeline for Jerusalem in the the elders of the church come out.

And there's this handoff of the ministry of the Holy Spirit sent from Christ for the continued gathering and sanctifying of his church and he'll say later in verse 28 therefore take heed to yourselves. And to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God or the Lord and God in the majority text, which he purchased with his own blood.

What a calling The Lord who is God has spilled his blood, not just to cancel a debt, but to purchase a church and not just a church that will remain in its forgiven. But infantile in theology, and infantile and holiness, and infantile in spiritual in, in spiritual growth. But a church that will be perfected.

That's what Jesus bought with his blood. That's what Jesus gave his spirit to do. And his spirit has done what He has taken for that church that Jesus bought with his blood and he has put overseers in it as his method of doing the work. And what's a big part of that method back up to verse 20 in Acts chapter 20.

Well, I'll start in verse 18 but but we'll get there. You know, from the first day that I came to Asia and what matter, I always lived among you serving the Lord with all humility with many tears and trials, which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews, how I kept back, nothing, that was helpful, But proclaimed, it to you and taught you publicly.

And so there's that public preaching and teaching in the church's gatherings and from house to house. And so the Holy Spirit's method for growing, the church is not only a ministry of the word that takes place in the form and the place that you have and the Lord is giving us by His great mercy.

Even right now, The Holy Spirit's method for growing, especially every household of his church for the equipping of the head of every household of his church is that the ministers of the word would go to each house and make specific exposition and specific application. It's difficult in a congregational context in which the attendance is uneven and praise God.

It is not that much anymore. So among us, I used to have to have all sorts of extra illustrations and extra applications not knowing who is going to show up on any one day and using those that hit the most heads in the congregation. But even now, when there's a fair amount of consistency in the attendance, every one of your households can use.

Can't you More specific correction and doctrine, more specific application. And what to do Many of you who are heads of households and hear the preaching and and try to think how can, how can I help my family in assimilating, what we've just been taught, what changes do we need to be making?

And and then even, you know, specifically to your wife and differently to each one of your children because each one of your children are different. It's a monumental task and you say, who is sufficient for these things and with the Bible we say are, sufficiency is of God and very specifically, God, the Holy Spirit, But that's not just a raw raw cry for what, your heart depends on.

As you seek to lead your household, It has method to it because the Holy Spirit has given particular men to help you. And they help you not just in the public preaching and teaching but without ceasing continually from one household to the next. A customized application of the ministry of the word.

It's a great grief that in congregational. Contexts where they have not had regular consistent systematic, pastoral visitation in which there is application of whatever we have been hearing in the public preaching and teaching to the specific nitty-gritty of each household and each member of every household. That when you say look the Bible says this.

Let's do this. What do you get? Well, you're not gonna come into my house and tell me what to do. That's what they say. What they mean is you're not going to come into my house and tell me huh? A discover, just how badly I need it. But I'm unwilling to admit and therefore will reject the actual ministry that could help me.

Because that's the way pride works. It is utterly self-destroying and despising of God and all the good that he puts around us. A husband who does not lead and does not make good. Use of the help meet that God has put in his home, is not going to be particularly likely to make good use of the shepherds that God has assigned to help him in his home.

Takes a lot of humility to admit just how we can sinful. We are more in that in Exodus 18 later. God helping us. So there's a ministry of the word that ought to include evangelism and where there's not a diagonal ministry to free the elders so that they don't have to fool with those things that are going to come in point two.

The work of the deacon Evangelism suffers house to house. Ministry suffers. We think about what we just said in the introduction about the historic decline at least in Reformed and Presbyterian circles. I'm not, you can't be deep and broad at the same time. So if you're from another denomination, you had wonderful deaconate ministry until yesterday.

Praise God. And tell me about it later. But when you think about the period of the historic decline of the right view and use of the Office of Deacon Is it not also accompanied by the historic decline of ministers who enter the public sphere and proclaim the Word of God, even to a hostile world world.

Is it not the same period of time in which there's been a historical decline in that house to house ministry in which fathers, and husbands aren't just called to the leadership of their house. Like, we're hearing about in the Sabbath school. These weeks as Oscar takes us through that book But where there's no help for them, or if you just tell them what they have to do they say that's impossible.

Never do it or I'll try to do it. And my family leadership will be a process in perpetually making myself miserable with how much I fail. Because we don't use the means of the God who called us to the ministry in order to fulfill the ministry. And so those who have the best view of how a household should run, have the worst experience of it.

Not only are the ministers of the word to have this evangelistic ministry and this house to house ministry that have especially a ministry of studying and leading in prayer verse 4, but we will give ourselves continually to so far. We've heard verse 42. They did not cease teaching and preaching.

We've heard verse 2. It's not desirable that we should leave the Word of God. Then we come to verse 4 and we hear but we will give ourselves continually too and what are you expecting to hear preaching and teaching in the Word of God? But what's the first thing that you hear, We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word, there are right.

Ways of praying, There are wise and good and skillful ways of praying. And we all know it inherently, even if we haven't been taught at explicitly because in our private worship, we come and we, we read God's word and perhaps by the Spirits help, we glean some things from it.

And then it comes time to pray and we don't know what we're doing. We have some things that we want and they're infantile temporal things. And as we get sanctified, we grow out and asking for those things that we have, other things that we want that our right, and good and spiritual things.

But when we come to ask for it, we fumble along Not knowing that God has put an entire prayer book in his Bible that flesh. Is out what we see as or call the Lord's Prayer. You see the priorities in the Lord's Prayer? Hallowed me thy name. That kingdom come thy will be done.

Have you read the Psalms? Do you not see the overlap of the priorities? The Lord's prayer is something to be prayed in this way. Not to be repeated ad nauseam, taking the vein repetition method of the pagan and marrying it to the scripture. God, help us and forgive us.

What are the, what is the, the book of Psalms? But a revelation from God, that praying with the same priorities, for the same sorts of things, in the same dependence upon, God can take a hundred and fifty different forms, so that there is an application and customization to every condition of soul, every circumstance, a providence, and still all of it.

Be Spirit inspired. Praying capital. I Psalms, but also spirit inspired praying lowercase. I God the Holy Spirit helping us to form our words. As we pray in a way, that is shaped by the mind of God in the Scriptures.

And so there's a necessity of instruction in biblical praying. How did the apostles discover their need? Well they heard Jesus. Pray, They say well you teach us Your teachers to pray. The Pharisees teach their disciples,

Luke chapter 11, and John taught, his disciples of which, by the way about, half of Jesus's, apostles had already been taught to pray.

Then her John the baptizer, a man full of the Holy Spirit from his womb from his mother's womb, pray. And then they come and they hear Jesus, pray, I said we want to know how to pray like that. You see, it was the spirit of Christ who carried along the the prophets we learn first Peter, 1, second Peter 1.

It was the spirit of Christ who carried David and others, as they wrote the prayer book of the Bible. I don't know if you had your Bible open. When we were doing 72 verses 17 through 19 for the call to worship, You would see verse 20 at the end of that book.

Lowercase, B of the Salter the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, or end it. How ridiculous the churches have prayer books. Well, no, every church should have a prayer about church. Without a Bible isn't even a church. Our ridiculous. The churches have extra prayer books when God already has one.

But how are the people going to know how to pray? This is one of the things that it is as well caught and perhaps better than taught. They are led in prayer and so there's a ministry of public prayer in the public preaching and teaching, and the public worship in, which there's preaching and teaching, there's a ministry of public prayer that the apostles had.

And there's an implication that they studied not just to be able to preach and teach but that they studied in order to be able to pray. Now, why is this necessary? Well, in part because you have to do it at home, dad husband, your wife, learns better skill in lifting up, her heart to God and her private worship.

By the way that you lead her in prayer in your family worship, the same thing. We have the word men, And if you're worrying about how long the sermon is going to be God, forgive you and just know that we're just going to do point one.

I'm serious because you stop listening and the reason it's long, it's because it's important And if you turn your heart away, to how difficult it is, and how long it's going to be, you'll miss something. That's that way because of how important it is. Okay, side over men. First Timothy chapter 2.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in oh godliness and reverence. And so you're praying for everyone everywhere and you're praying, especially for those whom God has put in places that are supposed to be used by him to maintain peace and you're praying in order that we may all live in godliness and reverence, for verse 3 of 1st Timothy 2, This is good and acceptable.

In the sight of God, our Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Do you not hear the same priorities at the at the end of Acts chapter 5, in the beginning of X chapter 6, that there is a ministry of the word that can get interrupted by chaos in the society and chaos in the home and ungodliness in the people, which doesn't just give a fence to God, but creates all of these extra variables that get in the way of the ministry of the words For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified and due time for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and speaking truth in Christ and not lying a teacher of the Gentiles and faith and true.

I desire. Therefore that the men pray everywhere lifting up. Holy hands without wrath and doubting and like manner. Also that the women adorn themselves and modest apparel with propriety moderate, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly clothing. But, which is proper for women. Professing godliness with good works.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission and so forth. He's, especially in the home, not just the church. A lot of interpretation of first, Timothy 2 focuses on the church which is true. That that's that's a place that he's focusing, but he's focusing on a ministry that takes place in the church because prayer is to be made by all Christians in the manner.

That is described in verses 1 through 5 and the primary place. They learn at is in a home where mom doesn't draw attention to herself. She may be far more intelligent than her husband. She may be far advanced of him in grace and yet God has given her a place, not to draw attention to herself.

But to seek with as much, diligent godly, good work to make that house run as well as possible. And one of the things that she is aiming at in the way she conducts herself as a wife and a mother. Is that her husband be freed to pray. So, do I believe in Deaconesses sort of?

The husband is an authority over the woman but the wife has a duty that aims at her husband lifting up. Holy hands without wrath and doubting that the family would know that morning and evening habit that has replaced the morning and evening sacrifices because we don't slaughter lambs anymore.

What we come and we bring the soul to God. We offer what the Scripture calls spiritual sacrifice? We don't burn incense anymore. Well, some of you doing your houses stink But we don't learn in sense anymore. The prayers of the saints, go up to God. Morning and evening. And in the family gathering, it's the dad.

It's the husband lifting up. Holy hands and conducting himself in his house without wrath not easily angered. And without doubt that, he's the one who's in the river first and stops tossing to, and fro. And he's the one who trains his own family in the Word and we don't have time to go that far.

But as the apostle talks about the distinction of roles, One of your primary roles husband father, Is that your whole family by the day after day, worship after worship experience of being led in prayer by you. This is a room for everyone praying at sometimes. Sure have a family prayer meeting.

Even better go apart with your wife and pray with her and hear her pray and be as Christ. The head of the church is to his bride and everything that his bride says that is right and according to the Word of God reinforce with your heart, listen to her.

Oh God, Take each of your children individually. Listen to them. Pray, You'll learn a lot about whether or not they pray. Well, You'll be able to instruct them because they won't be embarrassed in front of the whole family that you had to correct. Something that they said, You'll be able to lead them immediately in a more scripturally formed version of the prayer that they just lifted.

But how are you going to do that? If you don't have instruction and prayer yourself, If I hadn't been led and modeled for you, this part of the office of the minister of the Word in leading, what Calvin called the great prayer. You know, you when I first part of my life growing up and even gelicalism, you know, they called it the pastoral prayer because the pastor prayed and then they switched it because it sounded like pastors were too important And they said the congregational prayer and pastors still prayed.

But we used a different word to feel more egalitarian. And then all chaos broke loose in the church and it was no longer even the pastors who prayed, There's a duty for leading and modeling. It's one of the Reformations that we are making and pray for us that we will find a way in the life of this congregation to lead in prayer.

All sorts of households are able to find all sorts of time for all sorts of extracurriculars but very few can find time to gather for the prayer meeting. We made a Reformational change in which we quit reading by wrote red. Liturgical prayers. In unison is a congregation. Now, we need to grow not just our elders, but all of us and praying prayers that are formed from the Word so that when a husband goes home, and he leads his family through a passage of scripture.

He not only teaches them but then he starts to lift his hands and his voice and the whole family their hearts to God. And they can hear how the course of the prayer is directed by the passage that they've just read and the praises, and the confession, and the asking for help and the Thanksgiving, and the intercession for others Just flow.

So naturally from the Word of God and then in their private worship, They read a passage or even just a verse and they see what's in that passage. And they start to be able that wife or that 13 year old or that eight-year-old to start praying. Not according to the foolishness that comes out of our hearts, but according to the wisdom that comes out of the Bible and their prayers are different every day.

Why? Because you've got a Bible full of content for shaping every one of those prayers. And there's variety and life and authority and confidence. Because now you're asking things according to the mind of God, yes, you're practice of it. And understanding of it is imperfect. We do not know what to pray for as we ought but the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

How does he pray? According to the mind of God. Oh, if only I had access to the mind of God, you have access to the mind of God. And it's part of the ministry of the Word to teach you, how to lift up Bible-shaped prayer from your heart in an organic and alive and genuine interaction with the living God.

Using the Word of God independence, upon the Spirit of God, unto the ends of obedience to God, all to the glory of God. That's what prayer is supposed to be. No wonder. We all feel so embarrassed Every time we

open our mouths and lisplc babies, We love hearing babies lisp but it would be a weird congregation where everyone just rattled at one another, over the fellowship meals.

Well, is it not a word congregation where it sounds like that in heaven, when we have the Word of God and the Spirit of God and ministers appointed by God and deacons appointed by God, in order to set them apart for that ministry.

To all of these things, this ministry of the word that the purpose of the Office of Deacon as to free elders and pastors for that to these things. The Minister of the Word is to give himself continually and And if he gives himself continually, we'll go quickly through this last part of 0.1.

Well, just summarize it in one line. He will lead what most of the world, all of the world. And most of the church around us would call an unbalanced. Life is not going to have a ton of time for leisure. I appreciate many of you worrying about me that I don't spend a lot of time and leisure and there are things that I need to work.

Time in for, but you need a minister I need administrators. This is what elders are called to be as well to the extent that they can who is continually in worship and studying for worship leading worship in his home and teaching from other one home to another. But that worship is like, so that we may have that united theology and doctrine and that each of us individually.

And then in all of the gatherings of our houses and our congregations, we'll call upon the name of God, according to the Word of God and prayer. This is why the Office of Deacon exists. You say, oh, I don't have ministers like that. We don't have elders like that.

And you write you don't your minister wishes you had a minister like that But one of the things that God has given in order for us to have a minister like that is that we would have deacons like this and let us pray. God that hearing what his word says about them and putting it into practice, we may have such a ministry so that every member of the body as equipped to speak the truth in love and to pray to God.

In the way that the Apostle says and the opening verses of first, Timothy chapter 2, Let's pray.

We praise your O, God. Who are our refuge and strength whose words drives history who whose grace is as a river in the midst of your church, giving her life by your word by the sacraments by prayer. We praise you. That you are our refuge and strength that you are ever present, help exceedingly, found help.

So that every time we seek you, we find you,

So your word is proof true. He who seeks finds and we come to your throne of grace, not merely to search for mercy and help but to obtain mercy and to find help in our time of need. When we hear a passage like this opened, oh, Lord. We feel ourselves to be in a time of great need and so help us O God, to make new beginnings and following your design independence.

Upon you and bless each part of the reforming and the walking with you unto being able to do more according to your word. But Grant, most of all that you would be glorified every step along the way for all of the life and all of the goodness and all of the power can come only from you.

You are the God of our righteousness apart from which we have none. And we desire that even in our weakness, your strength would be glorified by the reminder and display that it is your grace that is sufficient for us. That it is your strength that is being made perfect in our weakness.

So that we may boast in weakness and walk and weakness because we walk by the Spirit and we have been crucified with Christ is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us and the life that we live, we live by faith in Him who loved us and gave himself for us.

So that you are triune. God would be exalted not only in these steps along the way as we have been asking but by through those steps bringing new season of you rending the heavens and coming down in power and giving life and displaying the work of your spirit. Oh, grant that it would be.

So we ask unto your glory in the name, in which you have glorified yourself, even the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.