

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, a situation arose that was caused by the growth of the church, leading to a dispute 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 those at 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 and 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, specify 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 ministries of the Deacon in assisting the Teacher:

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 meets together often

See that all the members 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.

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).

Jay – is this
how you want
this worded?

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.