

The Qualifications, Training, and Use of Deacons in the Local Church

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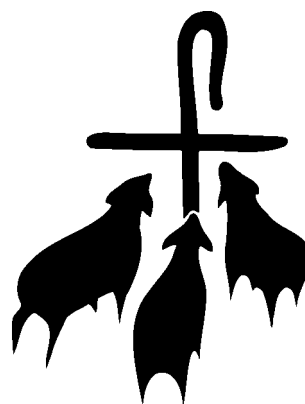


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THE QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING AND USE OF DEACONS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Preface

Bible-believing and Bible-preaching churches are located in all kinds of communities. Some are located in small town situations while others are located in large towns and cities of considerable size.

Many of these churches are pastored by zealous and hardworking pastors whose lives are 100% devoted to the preaching of the gospel and the furtherance of the work of God. Some churches may even be quite large with considerable influence in the communities in which they are located. It is also true that in the larger churches, the churches may employ rather large staffs of workers that are equally dedicated to the advancement of the work of God.

However, even when there are large churches with totally dedicated staffs of workers, working to the very limits of their abilities and dedicated efforts, the leadership of these churches would be forced to admit that they are still reaching only a tiny minority of the total population of the community, and the total efforts, resources and influence of their churches are not sufficient to accomplish more in the way of eternal results than they are now accomplishing.

In examining this problem honestly and closely, they discover that, though their members come from all areas of community life, their churches are failing to reach into the schools, into the workplaces, into business circles and into the upper circles of community leadership. They are even failing to make a major impact on the very neighborhoods of their community where their churches are located or where their members reside.

Some seek to solve this problem by simply hiring more staff or stretching their financial resources even farther. Their theory would be that by having larger organizations and sacrificially providing and using additional funds they will somehow solve the problem, and that, even if this approach fails, they will have done all God expects them to do in the communities in which they labor.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that there is a Biblical

approach that is God's answer to this problem. It is the total mobilization of the entire membership of the church, of all ages and types of people, to reach the community for Christ.

This approach will not win everyone in the community to the Lord, nor will it take the place of some of the other responsibilities of the local church before the Lord, but it will multiply the efforts of the local church through the training and use of every member of the church in God's work.

This approach was first illustrated in Acts 2:41-47 and continued to be demonstrated in the rest of the Book of Acts and the Epistles.

This approach will be the basis of this study. If properly understood and spiritually applied to the work of local churches, large or small, in any locality, it potentially will leave no school, no workplace, no neighborhood and no circle of community life lacking the impact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some will question why only the Deacons have been emphasized if the goal of this study is to involve the entire membership of the church in the work of the Lord.

Ephesians 4:11-16 makes it clear that the work of God begins with the leadership of the church, including both the pastoral staff and the deacons, completely fulfilling their purposes in the furtherance of the Gospel and the building up of the work of God.

In this passage, however, one of their major responsibilities is that of equipping and using the total membership of the body of believers in the work of God. This is shown to be one of the intentions God had in raising up such leadership. This is borne out in the use of the lay people of the church even in the very beginnings described in Acts 2:41-47 and Acts, chapters 7 and 8.

This means that if the deacons are properly chosen, trained and used, potentially no one in the church will be left out of the work of the furtherance of the Gospel. The great unreached areas of the community will be reached with the Gospel. These deacons will be the very instruments the Lord can then use to enlist and then train others in the Church.

The Qualifications, Training and Work of New Testament Deacons

Scriptures That Can Be Used to Apply to Deacons

John 15:1-16	Romans 16:1 to 15
Acts 2:41-47	Philippians 1:1 to 4:20
Acts 6:1 to 8:40	I Timothy 3:8-13

1. **Each of these passages has an important bearing on the work of deacons.**
 - a. **John 15:1-16** is the teaching the Lord gave His disciples just 12 hours before He was to be crucified. It is part of a longer section, chapters 14-16, which concentrates on their spiritual qualifications and walk with Him which He requires for those who are to be used by Him in His work.
 - b. **Acts 2:41-17** speaks of the Godly development of new believers in the local church fellowship. After conversion it illustrates the spiritual development which is required before members of the body of Christ are entrusted with the work of God in leadership responsibilities.
 - c. **Acts 6: 1-8:40** tells of the urgent need the church had for the office and work of deacons, and of the qualifications, call and work of these first deacons in the Jerusalem Church.
 - d. **Romans 16:1-15** lists a number of people whom Paul especially commended as fellow workers even though they might not have been pastors and evangelists. Many of them were women who were not permitted to occupy major leadership roles in the church but were valuable as servants of the church. Some of the men on this list could have been faithful deacons who were just as important in the work of God as others.
 - e. **The Epistle to the Philippians** specifically mentions deacons in the introduction to the book, and so the entire content of the book has special application to them as well as to others.
 - f. **I Timothy 3:8-13** sets forth a more detailed list of the qualifications for deacons than that found in Acts 6:1-6. The importance and nature of their qualifications seem to be equated with that of the pastors in vs. 1-7.
2. Further consideration will be given to each of these passages when the qualifications given in them are fully listed and discussed.

The Qualifications and Work of the Deacons in Acts

Background of the Jerusalem Church

- A. **In Acts 2:41-47**, we find the beginnings of the normal working of the Jerusalem Church following the events of the Day of Pentecost and the conversion of more than 3000 people to add to the 120 believers who were already part of that body of believers. The Lord Himself honored this spiritual atmosphere. Since most of these members of the Body of Believers had been just won to the Lord, they were proving themselves to be totally responsive to the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the growth of their new faith.
- B. Some believe that **the 120 believers** who were meeting together in the last part of Acts 1 were already a Church, but that they were not yet operating in the full program of the Church because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to them.
- C. We note that, in these early beginnings of the working of the Church in Jerusalem, there was **such close spiritual harmony** among the believers, including the sharing of all their possessions and the lack of any recorded disputes among them, that there seemed to be no need for a more formal organization of the Church. It was simply led by the Apostles and perhaps a few others.
- D. **This state of very deep spiritual unity** continued until the end of Acts, chapter 5, vs. 42, though the problem of Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5:1-11 was the first indication that this very large congregation of believers was going to face some spiritual problems and would perhaps need to more highly organize their church fellowship. That first internal problem, in fact, may perhaps even have given some boldness to those who later wanted to stir problems in the Church. This perhaps opened the way for the dispute in chapter 6 which necessitated the appointment of the first deacons.
- E. Because of the large number of people in the Jerusalem Church and the seeming impossibility of them all meeting together for worship in one meeting place, some believe that the **"eating of bread from house to house" in Acts 2:46** indicates that they met in small groups or house churches rather than as one very large assembly, but that they were still considered as a single Church.

The Appointment of the First Deacons in the Jerusalem Church

- A. We note **that there is a close parallel** between the situation in the Church of Jerusalem, with the urgent need for both administrative and spiritual assistance for the Apostles which the crisis of Acts 6 created, and the situation Moses faced in his own ministry with the Israelites in the desert.
 - 1 In the early months of the wilderness journey, Moses found himself so burdened with the ADMINISTRATIVE details of the nation of Israel that they distracted him from his other responsibilities. It was finally through the wise counsel of his father-in-law, Jethro, in Exodus 18:13-27, that

Moses appointed JUDGES to deal with these ordinary affairs of the people.

- 2 Later, in Numbers, chapter 11, Moses also became overburdened with the SPIRITUAL problems of the people, who had repeatedly rebelled both against God and against the leadership of Moses, that he even came to the point where he despaired of living (Numbers 11:1-15). At that time, God Himself directed Moses to appoint 70 Elders from the tribes to be his spiritual counselors and help him spiritually carry the load (Numbers 11:16-30). God then also imparted His Spirit to these elders.
- 3 In the appointment of these two sets of helpers, one group to handle the administrative affairs of the nation of Israel and the other to deal with the spiritual problems which arose, we find the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament deacons. Although the New Testament deacons were initially appointed for administrative purposes, their ministries also included helping to carry the spiritual ministries of the church as is evidenced by the ministries of Stephen and Philip. This is why we see some parallel between these two situations.

B. The need for the deacons in the Jerusalem Church arose because of the diversity of background among the members. Although all of the believers in the Church were Jews, there were two different kinds of Jews with wide differences in background. Many of them were Jews from Palestine with Hebrew backgrounds. Others, however, were Jews from outside Palestine who was not only Greek speaking but who also would have been different in their cultural habits. In Acts 6:1, we note that this diversity caused tension among them because those from the Greek backgrounds felt that their widows were being neglected by the Palestinian Jews.

C. This problem of diversity was even more pronounced in the churches established outside of Palestine through the ministries of Paul and others. In those churches there were: Jews and Gentiles, masters and slaves, rich and poor and low and high classes of people. The mixing of so many different types of people, with their diverse cultural and racial backgrounds, caused major problems and threatened the unity and ongoing of some of them.

- 1 We note this problem especially in the Church at Corinth (I Corinthians, chapters 8-10) and the Church at Rome (Romans 14:1 to 15:6) where the eating habits of the Gentile believers deeply offended the Jewish believers. Only the strong teaching of Paul on the subject of how they were to settle these problems, together with his personal testimony concerning how he himself had dealt with such problems in his own life (I Corinthians, chapter 9), averted major splits in these churches.
- 2 This diversity was also the subject of the teaching of Ephesians 2:11-22, where Paul taught that it was the will of God for those who were both Jew and Gentile to be one in Christ and to act accordingly. This teaching continues in Ephesians 3:1-21. It is illustrated again in the Book of Philemon where Paul discusses how Philemon is to deal with the problem of his runaway slave, Onesimus.

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- D. In the Jerusalem Church, when the problem was brought to the attention of the Church leaders, they, like Moses before them, recognized that they were not called to the work of the administrative responsibilities of the Church and that such a burden would keep them from "prayer and the ministry of the Word," their spiritual responsibilities given to them as leaders by God.
- 1 We note that this emphasis closely fits the needs of today's pastors who need to concentrate on their Biblical responsibilities of dealing with the spiritual side of the ministry while leaving the administrative side to those who are Biblically chosen to handle those matters.
 - 2 Too many pastors find that they are unwilling to delegate matters to others and trust others to fulfill these responsibilities, even though they recognize that they are not spending as much time in the study and preaching of the Word of God, in prayer and in other spiritual responsibilities. This requires some firm decisions on their part that they will follow the Biblical pattern.
 - 3 The ministry of these deacons, like the ministries of the judges and elders in the time of Moses, did not take away from the leaders the responsibility for the overall oversight of the work and the authority over that work which was necessary for the stability and ongoing of the work of the Church. There would be no competition between these two offices, for these deacons would still work under the leadership and authority of the Apostles.
- E. This need in the Church therefore led to the appointment of the first DEACONS, with their qualifications and responsibilities very clearly set forth as distinguished from those of the leaders.
- 1 Although all of them are named, only Stephen and Philip became famous as public spokesman and defenders of the faith. We can assume, however, that all seven of them were deeply spiritual men who were known and respected in the Church both for their spirituality and for their ability to perform the tasks assigned to them, and that they faithfully carried out the responsibilities assigned to them.
 - 2 In their original designation and assignment as deacons, ministries other than administration are not mentioned, but we know from the ministries of Stephen and Philip that they had other responsibilities as well which would seem to correspond to the work of the Elders assigned to help Moses carry the spiritual burdens of Israel and to encourage him.

The Qualifications for Their Appointment as Deacons

- A. Men of honest report (good reputation).
- B. Men full of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Men full of faith and wisdom.

****The fact that this list of qualifications was greatly expanded upon in 1 Timothy 3:8-15 does not imply that these men were less qualified than later deacons. Acts 6:1-8 clearly indicates that they undoubtedly possessed the same spiritual qualities as those mentioned in I Timothy 3:8-15.**

The Spiritual Ministries of Stephen and Philip

Stephen and His Stand for the Lord.

- A. As one of the first deacons, chosen under the strictest spiritual requirements by the Jerusalem Church, Stephen was not only a recognized example of spirituality in the Church, but he was also a man of fervent zeal for the Lord. Among all the deacons, he was perhaps best qualified for the public ministry in Jerusalem the Lord gave him.
- B. We assume that he had fully carried out his assigned responsibilities as a deacon, but that he was not satisfied to limit himself to these and chose to also take the same public stand for the faith that the Apostles had taken before him.
- C. **Why was it so important for him to take such a public stand?**
 - 1 The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had already heard the Gospel from the Apostles and had tried to forcibly stop the progress of their Gospel witness. Perhaps they felt that if they were to limit themselves to stopping the Apostles, that would also automatically discourage the thousands of believers and stop the ongoing work of the Lord.
 - 2 It was important, therefore, that lay people like Stephen also take a bold stand for the Lord to prove to the Jews that the work of the Lord was not limited just to the leaders, but that the thousands of lay people of the Church also had the same love and zeal for the Lord and were prepared to die for the faith if need be.
 - 3 His stand for the faith thus called attention to the true strength of the Church and to the potential threat it posed to those who opposed it. Though this caused his martyrdom, it served its purpose.
- D. **Several important results came from his witness and martyrdom:**
 - 1 The testimony he left behind and the example he was to other believers in the Church would have surely emboldened them and prepared them for the equally difficult ministries God had planned for them which were to follow the scattering of the believers in Acts 8:2. We note that the scattered believers immediately began evangelistic efforts for the Lord in every place where they were scattered.
 - 2 Just as important, this was perhaps Saul's (PAUL'S) first introduction to the full truth of the Gospel.
 - a As an observer at the stoning of Stephen and as one who was

very much involved in that stoning, Saul could hardly have missed the full contents of the sermon Stephen gave, with its clear Gospel presentation, and, though he was unwilling to believe it at the time, it must have helped prepare him to be saved.

- b Though Stephen's message angered him at the time and caused him to intensify his efforts against the Christians, Saul therefore surely would have recalled the words of Stephen when he finally met the Lord on the road to Damascus in Acts, chapter 9. Though he never attributes this to Stephen in his testimonies before kings and in his epistles (SEE: Acts 24:1-21; Acts 26:1-23; Galatians 1:13-18; Philippians 3:4-9), it seems correct to say that Stephen's message was a major factor in his salvation. It may also have been a major factor in his own willingness to die.
- 3 Another important result, though it might not have been welcomed and appreciated by the Jerusalem believers at the time, was the scattering of the believers due to the persecution that followed Stephen's death. This forcible expulsion of the Christians from Jerusalem led to the widespread preaching of the Gospel by mostly lay people in all areas of Palestine and in other parts of Asia.
- a Nearly a year had passed since the Lord had given His final instructions concerning the evangelization of the world (Acts 1:7, 8), and there were still no signs that the Apostles were making any efforts to evangelize outside the City of Jerusalem itself. Had this persecution not come, it is possible that they would have waited even that much longer before finally deciding to take the Gospel to other parts of Palestine and Asia.
 - b It was also important at this time that Antioch should be prepared for the time when men like Paul, Barnabas, Silas and others would use that city as their base for their missionary journeys to Asia Minor and Europe. Had God waited until the Apostles themselves were ready and willing to begin to obey the Lord in reaching out with the Gospel, these missionary journeys might never have come to pass in the way they did.

Philip and His Ministry to Samaria and Beyond

- A. Philip was another of those deeply spiritual and very zealous deacons first appointed by the Jerusalem Church for administrative duties. We assume that he, like Stephen, had faithfully fulfilled the duties originally assigned him but that he was not satisfied with only the administrative side of the work of the Lord and earnestly desired to be used by God in the furtherance of the Gospel.
- B. Perhaps he was also influenced by Stephen's example of total dedication to the Lord and willingness to follow Him completely. The seeds of his later zeal and passion for God's work were perhaps sown at that time, but his first opportunity for service in the preaching of the Gospel came when he was among the believers who were scattered by the persecution which followed Stephen's

martyrdom. As noted before, from a human standpoint, perhaps he and the other believers might not have welcomed the persecution which made their witness possible, but they took it as an opportunity from the Lord rather than as something for which to blame God.

- C. Philip's first ministry was in Samaria. This was especially significant because the Samaritans had a long history, dating clear back to the time when Jeroboam had totally rebelled against God by turning the Northern Kingdom to idol worship, of being despised by the pure Jews.
 - 1 They were not only considered to be apostates to the Jewish faith which God had given them, but they were also not considered to be pure and true Jews because of their marriages with the surrounding pagan nations and the Assyrian invaders (722 B.C.).
 - 2 Even in the time of Christ, the Jews would have no direct dealings with them, refusing to pass through their land or to even talk with them.
 - 3 Even the disciples of the Lord, when the Lord purposely passed through Samaria in John, chapter 4, felt that they did not belong there and wanted to leave as quickly as possible. The words of John 4:34-38 seem to indicate that these disciples did not even feel the Samaritans were worthy of the Gospel or were to be the future object of their ministries.
 - 4 The Samaritan woman herself had marveled that Jesus, as a Jew, would even talk with her or show a spiritual concern for her, and this was the basis of the testimony that she gave to her town mates.
- D. The work of Philip in Samaria was productive. At this time, because he was under the authority of the Jerusalem leaders, the Church sent Peter and John up to Samaria when the work began to have converts and the work needed to be examined and organized (Acts 8:14-25). In a total reversal of his attitude in John 4, Peter then stayed to minister in other villages of the Samaritans.
- E. Later, Philip was led by the Spirit to minister to the Ethiopian Eunuch in the desert and then to go down to Caesarea on the coast. While he was there, Peter was called by God to be the first witness to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius.

Observations and Principles to Be Drawn from this First Appointment of Deacons in the Jerusalem Church

- 1. Pastors were not expected to carry the full load of the work of the Church, but were to seek out spiritual men who could be trusted to shoulder some of the administrative load so that the pastors could be freed for the spiritual ministries to which God had called them and which were to be their main priority and focus.
- 2. The deacons were to be under the leadership and authority of the leaders and the local church and were not to usurp these, but their function in the work of and outreach of the Church was considered very valuable both to the Lord and to the Church. They were utilized in every possible way in the total program of the

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Church. This made them co laborers in the work of God with the leaders.

3. We assume that these deacons had been fully trained by the Apostles before they would assume their outreach ministries. This growth in their Christian lives and training for their future ministries would have begun as early as Acts, chapter 2 when some of them may have been first converted.
4. Their faithful work in the Jerusalem Church and zeal for the Lord would have been communicated also to the other members of the Jerusalem Church preparing them also for their widespread outreach ministries which began in Acts, chapter 8.
5. The outreach work of men like Stephen and Philip would have had the full blessing and support of the Jerusalem Church. We assume that they were not doing their work independently without consulting the leaders of the Church and receiving their advice.
6. We note the principle of the full mobilization of the membership of the Church for the spread of the Gospel. Without this, the outreach with the Truth would have been more limited. The Apostles themselves could not have carried the load of reaching such vast expanses of areas needing the Gospel. It was also necessary that they maintain the base for the Gospel in Jerusalem.
7. We also note the ongoing efforts of the Church as they utilized these deacons and other laypeople in the expansion of the Gospel Witness. They were not satisfied with the initial outreach, but pressed on through the raising up of men like Paul and others towards the full completion of the task they had been given by the Lord to "Go ye into all the world." (SEE: Matthew 28:19). They faced the same challenge that faces the Church today, that they might be satisfied with initial efforts and abandon any further attempt to reach farther or to continue indefinitely in the work of outreach. They refused to yield to this temptation and God honored their determination.

Closer Examination of the New Testament Standards for Deacons

Listing of Relevant New Testament Standards

Acts 6:1-8	Romans 16:1-15	Philippians 1-4	I Timothy 3:8-13
Good reputation	Servants hearts	Strong in love	Be grave (dignified)
Full of Holy Spirit	Hard Workers	Approving excellent things	Not double tongued (honest)

Full of wisdom	Sacrificial	Sincere and blameless	Not given to much wine
Full of power	Approved in Christ	Filled with righteous fruit	Not greedy of money
Full of faith		In unity with the believers	Holding the faith with a pure conscience
		Not selfish or conceited	Proven (tested) and found blameless
John 15:1-16	Acts 2:41-47	Humble in following Christ's example	THEIR WIVES *Be grave (dignified) *Not slanderers *Sober (quiet)
Daily dealing with sin in the their lives	Unity	Blameless and innocent	Faithful in all things
Devoted to God's Word	Spirit of sacrifice	Beyond Reproach	Husbands of one wife
Close walk with and love for the Lord	Responsibility of all believers.	Holding fast the Word	Ruling children and house well
A consistent prayer life		Spirit of rejoicing	
Strict obedience to His Word		Standing Firm in the Lord	
Love for others		Forbearing spirit	
Faithful spreading of His Word and work		Victory over anxiety	
		Purity in thinking	
		Strong joyous spirit	

AREAS OF SPIRITUAL IMPORTANCE IN THEIR LIVES

Their Personal Spiritual Character

1. They are to be mature both in their ages, in their salvation experience, in their thinking and in their actions, so that they can be looked up to as spiritual examples and leaders. I Timothy 3:10 mentions that they must first be "tested" so that they are proven to be beyond any reproach. The Scriptures do not tell us how old these first deacons were, but we do know that they were seasoned Christians and proven in their walk before the Lord. The same qualification of maturity was given for the pastors in I Timothy 3:6, where Timothy is warned against choosing a "novice" or immature person as a pastor.
2. There are to be no moral failures of any kind in their lives. They are to not only be holy and pure in their lives, but they are also to constantly guard themselves so that they do not fall into the temptation to practice moral impurity. Failure in this area especially that of adultery would be grounds for disqualification for the position. (I Timothy 3:8, 9)
3. They are to be consistent in their spiritual walk with the Lord: in daily dealing with any sin in their lives, in being devoted to and faithful in His Word, in their love and devotion for the Lord, in their prayer life and in their obedience to His Word. (John 15:1_10)
4. They are to be in right relationship with all others in the Church, promoting unity and close harmony among the believers and setting the example for such right relationships. (John 15:12; Philippians 2:1_4)
5. They are to accept responsibility for the teaching and spread of the Gospel to the lost, (John 14:16; Acts 6:1_8:40) with deep respect for the One who has chosen them to share in this ministry.
6. They are to be willing to faithfully and humbly work under the leadership of the pastors without any rivalry, competition, undercutting or jealousy of the positions occupied by these leaders (Numbers 12_16; 16:1_40; Acts 8:14_25)

Their Homes and Families

1. They are to be married to only one wife, with the right relationship with that wife according to Ephesians 5:25-33 and I Peter 3:7 and other passages from both the Old and New Testaments.
2. They are to be model husbands and fathers, demonstrating that they are able to "manage" well their own homes as evidence that they can be trusted with the management of the work of God. (SEE ALSO: Ephesians 6:1-4)
3. Their home life is to be a spiritual example to the outside world, and both Christians and non-Christians are to be impacted by it.

Their Spiritual Faithfulness and Commitment in Carrying out Their Assigned Responsibilities

1. In Acts 6:1-7 (compare also: Exodus 18:13-26), the stated purpose of appointing the deacons was to relieve the burdens on the pastors by having the new deacons take over the heavy administrative responsibilities of the Church which were distracting them from the spiritual purposes to which God had called them.
2. With the appointment of these deacons, the leaders were never to have to worry about these administrative affairs, but were to be able to trust these men completely to do them faithfully and with true heart dedication to them so that the leaders were freed from all worry and concern about them.
3. For those men, being given these responsibilities was like a CALLING FROM GOD which would be judged by God Himself for the thoroughness and completeness with which they were carried out, and they approached them with this attitude and commitment.
4. IN THE CHURCH TODAY, there is an exact parallel between the calling of these first deacons and the calling of deacons today:
 - a. Deacons today are to have the same clear spiritual attitude of spiritual acceptance of this position as a calling from God Himself to their lives.
 - b. They are required to have the same dedication and commitment to these responsibilities as would be required in any other ministry of the Church.
 - c. They are to have no competition or tension concerning the work of others in the Church and especially would never undercut others in the Church.
 - d. Though the tasks may sometimes seem very common and mundane, they are to be accepted as vitally important to God and to the ongoing and success of the work of the Church. No one would ever dare to minimize or despise the vital place of these tasks.
5. THE PASTORS THEMSELVES must realize how this parallel applies to them and their own ministries.
 - a. Pastors today, though in overall leadership in the Church, believing that the deacons have been spiritually chosen for their office and are fully qualified to fulfill their responsibilities, must have the same willingness to trust the deacons in their work and decisions. They are not to feel that they constantly have to divert their attention from their spiritual responsibilities of preaching and teaching the Word, prayer and their leadership in working with the spiritual needs of the Church.
 - b. It is unfortunately true that many pastors find it difficult to keep sharply focused on their own ministries and believe it essential that every other function in the church is to have their direct (and time-consuming) supervision.

- c. When both the pastors and the deacons understand their own place and function in the work of God and devote themselves completely to filling that place and function, then the work of God will go on harmoniously.

Their Ministry of Spiritually Upholding, Encouraging and Standing with the Pastor against Evil Forces

1. This was a key part of the spiritual ministry of the ELDERS appointed in Numbers, chapter 11. Moses was discouraged by the burdens of the spiritual ministry God had given him and urgently needed men to uphold, encourage and spiritually stand with him in facing the rebellions of the Tribes of Israel and the spiritual perils and tensions these caused.
2. The Apostles in the New Testament Church would have faced the same problem, with tension coming both from without and within the Church. These first deacons were the type of people they could depend on for such support. The stand taken by both Stephen and Philip indicates such close relationship and support of the Apostles on the part of the deacons.
3. It is important that the pastor should be able to completely trust the men who are called to be deacons, and that these deacons themselves guard themselves against the temptation to become part of the spiritual problems of the church by contributing to disunity and the tearing down of the ministry of the pastor.
4. In looking at the work of the ELDERS appointed in Numbers, chapter 11, we wonder if a few of these were numbered among the men in Numbers, chapter 16, vs. 2, who participated in the rebellion of Korah.
 - a. It is sadly true that in many local churches where the work and ministry of the pastor, and even his own reputation, has been carnally undermined and torn down, that the deacons of these churches have sometimes been among those who led or aided these carnal attempts to destroy their pastor.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, indicates the seriousness with which God sees the attempts of anyone, whether leaders or those working under them, to undermine and destroy the work of God and the judgment he will bring upon them, and all workers in the Church are to take these warnings very seriously and act accordingly.
 - c. This does not mean that the pastor is always right, that he never would need spiritual counsel and even spiritual correction when he is wrong or that there might not come a time when the deacons would need to initiate Biblical discipline against the pastor in times of immorality or other grave offenses.
 - i. It does mean that ALL matters will be handled in spiritual ways, where any action or advice is done in love, where there is deep respect for the position the pastor occupies, where his personal

reputation and testimony before the congregation and community is guarded, where no gossip or slander is part of what is being done and where there is care that there is no bitterness or maliciousness involved in what is being done. (SEE: Galatians 6:1; I Timothy 5:1, 17-20)

- ii. Even in very extreme cases, where a pastor has been involved in immorality or some other grave offense which makes his continued ministry in the Church inadvisable and the pastor must be disciplined and removed from his position, the matters are to be handled in love, with genuine sorrow and spiritual grief over the cause of his removal and with the deep desire that these matters be repented of and the pastor restored to right relationship with the Lord and God's people.
- iii. Even in these extreme cases, though the Scriptures seem clear that a pastor who is involved in immorality, for instance, can never again occupy the position of pastor in any church (SEE: I Timothy 3:1-7), if he truly repents of the sin, confesses it openly to the Church itself and altogether abandons the sin, the deacons and the Church as a whole must demonstrate spiritual forgiveness. (SEE: II Corinthians 2:1-11; Ephesians 4:30) and restore such a one to fellowship (SEE: Galatians 6:1). Though he is disqualified from the office of the pastor following such immorality, he is entitled to the same spiritual considerations given to any other believer, including forgiveness and restoration.

Their Spiritual Passion for the Growth and Outreach of the Church

1. Stephen and Philip represent the passion and zeal for the Lord and for His work that God expects of all who occupy this important position in the Church (SEE: Acts 6:8-8:40). While dedicated to their original calling to administrative responsibilities, they also had deep heart burdens for the growth and outreach of the Church and found the leading of the Lord in working with the leaders in being a vital part of that.
2. We know little of the expression of such spiritual passion and zeal in the lives of the other deacons named in Acts 6:1-8, but we assume that they were no less spiritual in their approach to the work of God. It is very possible that, in the scattering of the believers in Acts, chapter 8, they were among the unnamed ones who went with the Gospel to some of the farther regions of Palestine and Asia beyond Jerusalem itself. (SEE: the later discussion on this subject)
3. Though the deacons in most areas today might not suffer the kind of persecution that would forcibly "scatter" them to other areas, their work both within the local church itself and in the outreach of the local church to other communities is just as vital as the work of the deacons of the Book of Acts. As was true with Stephen and Philip, their work does not take the place of the work of the pastors, but rather it supplements that work in the winning of the lost and even in the establishing of new groups of believers. (SEE: the later discussion on this subject).

4. It is also possible, as is increasingly evidenced in the outreach of many local churches today, that today's deacons can also be effectively used in SHORT TERM MISSIONS TEAMS which both evaluate and minister in some of the home and foreign fields which are part of the missionary program of their Church. (SEE: the later discussion on this subject)
5. **Whatever these ministries might involve, the deacons:**
 - a. Still are to recognize any such ministry as a SPIRITUAL ministry, requiring that SPIRITUAL people participate in it, that they use SPIRITUAL methods, that they have SPIRITUAL objectives and that they see genuine (and God-honoring and pleasing) SPIRITUAL results.
 - b. Still are to be sent out by and are to be under the authority and direction of the local church as long as they are part of that local church.
 - c. Still are to be accountable to the local church for the nature and quality of their work.

The Training of the Deacons for Their Work and Ministry

Areas of Their Lives Where Training Is Essential.

Training in the Basics of Their Personal Walk with the Lord

1. We often wrongly assume that longtime Christians, including leaders in the Church, because they have been under the teaching and preaching ministry of the Church, have the indwelling Holy Spirit and seem qualified for leadership in the Church, both know how to conduct their personal walk with the Lord and are daily practicing such walk. Unfortunately, this is not always true.
 - a. It is always important for ALL of God' people to be deeply spiritual. It is important for the blessing and approval of God upon their lives, for the example and testimony of their walk before others, both Christians and non-Christians, and for any witnessing they might do for the Lord. These qualities are especially important for any that are in positions of leadership in the Church. This is why the qualifications for pastors and deacons, listed in I Timothy 3:1-13 are so extremely strict. With the glorious privilege of serving the Lord comes the strict spiritual standards that they must adhere to in their lives.
 - b. It is true, however, that many Christians either have never been taught the ingredients for spiritual living or they simply have never considered them as worthy of being high priorities in their lives. This is true not only for ordinary lay people in the Church but also for those who are qualified for leadership positions.

- c. It is even possible for those who are in the highest positions of leadership in the Church to be "backslidden" in their personal walk with the Lord and in their overall spirituality. Either they have fallen into habits of neglect in their personal spiritual lives, lack the personal spiritual discipline which is necessary to live truly spiritual lives or they have permitted themselves to be too busy in their lives to take the daily time which is necessary to deal with areas in their lives which require personal spiritual attention and correction.
2. Through the preaching and teaching of the Word, with special long term emphasis upon this subject, and through special classes specifically taught to train the pastoral staff itself, Sunday School teachers, deacons and others in these area of the Christian life, such basic training may be given. These special classes will emphasize both the URGENCY and the MANNER of their own spiritual responsibilities in their personal relationship with the Lord and the personal spiritual DISCIPLINE that will be necessary in their daily lives. This will also include help with personally evaluating their progress in these needy areas and suggesting areas where action is needed.
3. We note that John 15:1-1 specifically deals with these needy areas of our daily spiritual walk with the Lord as the Lord dealt with His own disciples just before He was to be crucified. These men had trained for three and a half years with the Lord for the work of preaching the Gospel throughout the world, and had all of the technical training they needed for such ministry, BUT they seemed SPIRITUALLY UNPREPARED for the task ahead (SEE: Luke 22:24; John 13).
4. **THE MODEL** the Lord gave to them for spiritual walk before Him was:

a.	Vs. 1-3	To keep their hearts spiritually clean before the Lord by daily confession of sin and daily cleansing by God. (SEE: I John 1:9)
b.	Vs. 3	To give His word a vital place in their daily lives. (SEE: Psalms 119; Colossians 3:16)
c.	Vs. 4-6	To maintain a close relationship with the Lord Himself. This can be accomplished by deep thanksgiving for all He has done, renewing of love for Him and fresh daily commitment of one's life to Him. (SEE: John 14:21_24)
d.	Vs. 7	To daily communicate with Him in humble prayer and intercession. (SEE: Matthew 6:5_15; Philippians 4:6, 7)
e.	Vs. 10	To obey His word and to submit to Him. (SEE: John 14:21, 23, 24)

Training in Biblical Marriage and Family Life

1. Since I Timothy 3:8-13 puts special stress on this area of a deacon's life because of the importance both of his personal testimony to others and the testimony of leadership in his home and family, this area of his life needs special training.
2. Sometimes special seminars, using those who specialize in this field, can be arranged. All deacons would be expected to attend these seminars.
3. Just as important would be an ongoing program of preaching and teaching on the subject as a constant reminder to them of the importance of this subject.
4. This training should include all the main areas of MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE;
 - a. Why marriages and families fail to be the true Christian marriages God intends.
 - b. The place of each family member in God's plan for marriages.
 - c. God's overall standards for marriage and family life.
 - d. The specific Biblical standards for the husband and wife relationship.
 - e. The qualities God expects in a husband and wife relationship
 - f. The worship of the family in the home.
 - g. The parent-child relationship including:
 - i. The Biblical role of each parent in the lives of their children.
 - ii. What parents and children have the right to spiritually expect of each other.
 - iii. The Biblical training of children.
 - iv. The Biblical disciplining of children.

Training in How to Study, Understand and Correctly Apply God's Word in Their Lives

1. Again, we assume that with all the preaching and teaching veteran Christians hear through the years and with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they will learn by themselves how to study, understand and correctly apply God's Word and that they will do it automatically and consistently as they live their Christian lives. This also assumes that they therefore have strong Biblical foundations for what they believe, that their lives are solidly built upon these foundations and that they are committed to these and will never depart from them.
2. Unfortunately, this also may not at all be true for the majority of Christians. Many, who have never specifically been trained in this area, may have little idea how to bring together all the teaching they have had in Sunday School and from the

pulpit, may tend to read their Bibles aimlessly with little purpose and direction in their reading or may use their Bibles mainly for devotional purposes (the Daily Bread approach) with no real attempt to understand what they are reading.

3. Without specific training in these areas, they will go through life without this genuine and comprehensive understanding of God's Word, will be open to any teaching which comes along without daring to question it and never will be competent to be the kind of leaders who can be used to teach others and lead them in clear Scriptural paths.
 - a. There needs to be clear training in these areas of the Scriptures for all lay people and especially for those who will be called upon to lead others in some capacity. It is training which must be organized, must be systematic and must be thought of as an urgent necessity in the program of the local church.
 - b. In Bible Schools, such training is called by the simple name METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY. It is given as a required course for every student preparing for any type of service for the Lord whether in the area of Christian Education, youth work, the pastorate or the mission field.
 - c. Every pastor, as well as most full time members of their staffs, will have had training in such a course and would be qualified to share this knowledge with the lay people of the church. It remains only for the leadership of the Church to organize their program so that this is a required part of the preparation of lay people for successfully understanding and applying God's Word in their own lives and for work for the Lord.
 - d. It will be taught on the lay level, with the simplest possible terms being used so that it is both practical and applicable to the lives of all of those who come under this teaching. The emphasis of such study will not only be on understanding the means of correctly understanding and using the Scriptures but also on actually putting them into practice in their lives.
 - e. It probably should be taught as a special class, but it could be taught in the Sunday School hour or Saturday afternoons rather than during the week if the schedule of the deacons would be too tight. It could also be taught over a period of a number of weeks and perhaps even for one or two quarters of the year.
 - f. Such a course of study should include:
 - i. WHERE and HOW to study in the Bible. Many people have no idea where to begin in the study of the Bible and how to approach what they study, and have to be taught these things so that they do not just study aimlessly and without purpose.
 - ii. Methods of concentrating on their reading and studying of

the Bible and retaining what they read and study. A few suggestions will be necessary for marking and making notations in reading their Bibles, using colored pens to mark certain things and other methods for making sure that they are actually concentrating their hearts and minds and understanding and applying what they read.

- iii. How to COMPARE SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE to see the correct relationships between the various things they read and study to avoid misinterpretations.
- iv. How to INTERPRET what they read.
 - (1) Whether it is teaching which applies to us today. Why it might have applied to the Jews but not to the Gentiles. Why it might have applied only to the people of the day in which it was written (E.G. Tongues, Prophecy, etc)
 - (2) How it fits, without contradiction, with doctrinal teaching in other passages that deal with the same subject.
 - (3) How it correctly affects what we believe and stand for in the Christian faith.

Training in the Growth of Their Overall Knowledge of God's Word

1. In this training, they are being taught the necessity of continually increasing in their overall knowledge of God's Word in a wide range of areas:
 - a. Bible History, both of the Old and New Testaments.
 - b. The nature and character of God and the nature and functions of the members of the Trinity.
 - c. The nature of the relationship between God and mankind, both in the Old and New Testaments.
 - d. The nature of God's dealing with His people and why and how God acts towards His people, both in the Old and New Testaments.
 - e. The Biblical principles God applies to these relationships as the basis for both his blessing and judgment.
 - f. The nature of God's dealings with those who are not His people and why and how God deals with them, both now and in the future.
2. These teachings will deal with the basics, but it should also be emphasized that increasing in such knowledge is a LIFE LONG process and that this course of study is only to help them get started in the right direction.
3. It must also be emphasized that this knowledge must also be gained by their

own personal systematic study of the Word rather than just through the preaching and teaching of the Word in the Church.

4. It might also be wise to have some system of accountability so that they are continually encouraged in gaining this overall knowledge over a period of many years.

Training in Old and New Testament Survey

1. An Old or New Testament survey course is an introduction to each book of that part of the Bible. It is not intended to examine each verse of the book closely, but to help beginning students to basically know what each book is all about.
2. Such a course includes:
 - a. The general category of each book (e.g. historical book, poetical book, prophetic book, etc);
 - b. The author of each book and the persons to whom he was writing or who were the subjects of his book.
 - c. The background, place and time of the writing of each book (e.g. the time of the Patriarchs, the time of the wilderness journey, the time of the divided kingdom, etc)
 - d. Why each book has a distinctive place in the Word of God which cannot be filled by any other book (e.g. how each of the Gospels is different from the others and gives an essential picture of the Lord);
 - e. The spiritual purposes each book might have fulfilled in the day in which it was written.
 - f. The importance of each book in our lives today;
 - g. A brief survey of the general contents of each book.

Training in Detailed Studies in Selected Old and New Testament Books

1. The purpose of this study is to take certain key books from the Bible, especially from the New Testament, and give the lay people involved very close looks at these books, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Though this will be on the lay level rather than on the Bible College level, each book should be clearly taught with emphasis upon the teachings of each book, the relationship of these teachings to their own faith and practice and the relationship of these teachings also to the needs of those whom they will someday witness to and teach.
2. Some of the Key Books of the New Testament, for instance, would be:
 - a. The Gospel of John, because of its emphasis upon the Person and Work of the Lord, and how this applies to what we BELIEVE about Him.
 - b. The Acts of the Apostles, because of its emphasis upon the history of the

- c. The Epistle to the Romans, because of its solid teaching on some of the most important doctrines of the faith.
 - d. The First Epistle to the Corinthians, because of its emphasis upon local church problems and their spiritual solutions.
 - e. The Epistle to the Galatians, because of its strong refutation of the false teaching concerning the Old Testament Law of Moses and its emphasis upon the true doctrine of Salvation and God's means of victory in the Christian life through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - f. The Epistle to the Ephesians, because it also is heavy in doctrinal teaching.
 - g. The Epistle to the Philippians, because of the example it presents of a spiritual church which was especially commended for its deep love for the Lord and its willing sacrifice in every way for Him (SEE ALSO : II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9)
 - h. The Epistle to the Hebrews, because it met the specific needs of the seeking Jews concerning the Old Testament and its relationship to the Person and Work of the Lord.
 - i. The Epistle of I John, because it is both a refutation of the heresies which arose in the latter part of the 1st Century and also sets forth the proofs of which are to be manifested in the lives of those who are truly born again.
 - j. The Book of Revelation, both because it exposes some of the errors which arose at the end of the 1st Century which have their counterparts today, and also because it sets forth a complete picture of God's plan for the future.
3. These can either be taught over a long period of time, even over a period of many years, from the pulpit or in S.S. Classes OR they can be taught one by one in special Local Church Lay Training Classes (SEE ALSO: the later discussion of this subject under METHODS OF TRAINING).
4. These books can also be taught in sets rather than singularly. For instance:
- a. The Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon
 - b. The Pastoral Epistles: I and II Timothy and Titus.
 - c. The General Epistles: James, I and II Peter, I, II, and III John and Jude.

Training in Basic (Elemental) Bible Doctrine

1. It is not enough for doctrine/what we believe to be just preached or taught bit by bit. Lay people also need a detailed and concentrated study of it, so that they know not only what they believe about various things, but also how various doctrines Scripturally fit together to form "the faith" (Jude, vs. 3).
2. The presence of so many false teachings, cults, departures from Biblical truths and other compromises make this study doubly important. They are hearing these false teachings from the radio, television and other sources, and teachings contrary to the Scriptures often seem very reasonable and appealing.
 - a. Some of these false teachers seek to even infiltrate the Church, posing as "professing" Christians, to lead Christians astray (SEE: Acts 15; Acts 21:18-25; Romans 2:17-21; 4:1-23; Galatians 1:6-9; Galatians 2:1-21; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; II Peter 2:1-3; II John, vs. 7-11 and Jude, vs. 4)
 - b. The false teachers very cleverly use the Scriptures in distorted ways.
 - c. As officers of the Local Church, it is the solemn obligation of deacons, S.S. teachers and other leaders in the Church to both know and stand with the pastor in the defense of "THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS." (SEE: Jude, vs. 3c). They cannot do this unless they themselves both know and hold firmly this "FAITH".
3. Two books which many have found helpful for such courses are: *Elemental Theology* by Emory Bancroft and *the Great Doctrines of the Faith*, by Evans.
4. Since it is being taught on the lay level, it needs to perhaps be on a simpler level than that taught to 1st year Bible College students, but it still should be complete and backed by clear Scripture texts.
5. **Such Teaching Should Include at Least These Major Doctrines:**
 - a. The Doctrine of God.
 - b. The Doctrine of the Scriptures.
 - c. The Doctrine of Jesus Christ
 - d. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 - e. The Doctrine of Salvation
 - f. The Doctrine of the Church
 - g. The Doctrine of the Last Things

Training in How to Share God's Truth with Others

Training in Methods of Teaching God's Truth in Sunday School Classes

1. This has to do with work in the Sunday School where a set curriculum is used but where it is necessary to have a teacher trained in the best METHODS of teaching the lessons.
2. There are many that know God's Truth quite well and who might have the skills to teach, but they do not know HOW to communicate that Truth to others. They need to know the best methods to use in communicating this truth and be trained in actually using these methods.
3. In Bible Colleges, this course would be known as METHODS OF BIBLE TEACHING, but on the local church level, it would be shared on a much more elementary level.
4. The main needs of such trainees are not only to be taught how to teach a lesson, but also how to effectively involve the class in the lesson so that the members of the class are not only thinking in their hearts concerning the truths shared but are also responding as the Lord speaks to their hearts through the questions they have or the insights God has given them through the lesson.

Training in Conducting Home Bible Classes and One-on-one Classes

1. These classes are different from the S.S. Classes held in the local church setting. They usually involve fewer people, sometimes even just one person, are more informal in nature and may even include some social time at the end.
2. They can be held either in the homes of Christians who invite in friends and neighbors or in the homes of interested unsaved people. They therefore provide a "low key" way to share the truth.
3. We note that the FALSE CULTS use these methods extensively and usually send a team of two or more workers to conduct them. Few people would willingly attend their meetings in their churches, but would be willing to listen to their false teachings in a less threatening atmosphere.
4. For churches that stand for the Truth, this offers a golden opportunity to penetrate homes or be in situations where people are willing to listen to the Truth but are not yet ready to attend the church itself.
 - a. The danger here is that many in such classes never take the step of uniting with the body of believers once they have been converted but make the home Bible Class an end in itself.
 - b. It is important, therefore, that the leaders of such groups are local church oriented and have as their goal the full results of such classes...salvation, discipleship, baptism and local church membership.
5. We note that lay people are the best means to reach people in these situations because they are on the same human level as the ones they are teaching and

the people attending would not feel intimidated by them. They are dealing with friends and neighbors in these situations and are trusted and looked up to.

6. There is no reason why young people should not be trained to reach their fellow young people in such small group settings, providing the young people are both spiritual enough and acquainted enough with the Scriptures to conduct these sessions. They could do it in perhaps in even more informal settings than those used by adult leaders because they could utilize after school opportunities, hikes, picnics and other times.
7. The main training which is needed is how to effectively use such opportunities so that vital truth is not only shared but that it is shared in such a way that hearts would be moved by it to make decisions for Christ. They also need to be trained in their full purposes for such classes and their full spiritual responsibilities to those they reach.
8. An effective booklet to use for such Bible Classes would be: *WON BY ONE* by Mel Lacock.
 - a. This has been used effectively in hundreds of such situations. It is a very basic and simple study book that pays close attention to a step-by-step approach to the Truth.
 - b. The first twelve lessons deal with Salvation Truth and the next twelve lessons deal with the Christian Life.

Training in Methods of Witnessing God's Truth in Evangelism

1. This would be known in Bible Colleges as **PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF EVANGELISM.**
2. **STUDIES IN LOCAL CHURCH EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS.**
 - a. In countless numbers of churches, most Christians are used to Church Evangelism, where evangelistic meetings are held regularly in the Church itself and where the members invite their friends and relatives to attend. They depend on others to present the Gospel and then to lead them to the Lord.
 - b. Some have called this type of evangelism by the name, **FOUR WALL EVANGELISM.** It uses the excellent facilities of the church, it is a joint effort of all of the members, it uses the best possible speakers and communicators for evangelism and it gives the right atmosphere for the presentation of the Gospel to large numbers of people.
 - c. This type of evangelism uses every possible means to get people in to hear the Gospel in all areas of Church ministry.
 - i. The Sunday evening services in many churches are often devoted to this.

- ii. Many years ago, most churches would yearly invite a special evangelist to come in and hold one or two weeks of evangelistic meetings, with a baptismal service at the close for new converts.
 - iii. Funerals, weddings, special holidays, special concerts, banquets are also used to present the Gospel to friends and relatives of the members who might only attend on such a special occasion.
 - iv. Children and young people are reached through AWANA programs, youth meetings, Sunday Schools, DVBS, camps and retreats.
 - v. Many churches also have special "enquirers classes" where interested persons hear teaching on the truth of salvation. They may extend a full quarter of the year. The WON BY ONE book by Mel Lacock is often used in these classes. At the end there would be opportunity for decisions by those who attended these classes.
- d. Although this approach is valuable and is a vital part of any local church program of evangelism, the problem with this type of evangelism is that it only reaches those who come within "the four walls" of the Church and does not vitally involve all of the members themselves in the full responsibilities of both presenting the Gospel and then in leading people to the Lord.
 - e. Thus, while such evangelism is vital to the growth of the Church, it leaves out the hundreds of personal contacts and opportunities these same members have at their schools, their places of work and their neighborhoods. Most of the unsaved in such situations will not naturally and voluntarily come into the Church itself to hear the Gospel. Therefore, no matter how large or how successful the Church itself is, using only this type of evangelism means that most of the unsaved will still remain unreached with the Gospel.

3. EVERY MEMBER PERSONAL EVANGELISM OUTREACH.

- a. This is the use of every member of the Church, whatever their ages might be, to reach people with the Gospel in the situations or places where they are outside the four walls of the Church itself.
- b. Whether these unsaved people are children, young people or adults, there will be some members of the church who will be acquainted and involved with them as schoolmates and associates and can effectively be used to give them the Gospel and help them make decisions.
- c. This approach does not bypass the local church, but rather is a church program to send the members out to do the work that the church cannot do in its regular or special meetings.
- d. This training program by the local church is especially important not only because of the teaching of the false cults, but also because there are

false approaches to evangelism even in Evangelical circles.

- i. Some Evangelicals believe that teaching on hell and punishment will only offend and drive away university students and intellectuals. Their approach centers more on our "separation from God", the "love of God", etc.
- ii. More recently, some Evangelicals have come out with the false ideas that "God will give a second chance to those who have never heard the Gospel," "God will only judge men and women according to the light they have," and "Even some Buddhists and Moslems and Hindus will be saved if they have never heard about Jesus but they have truly sought after God."
- e. These members are still responsible to the local church and any results will be brought into the local church so that those won become part of a body of believers.
- f. By enlisting all of its members, of all ages and all situations, the Church is thus multiplying its efforts to reach the lost.
- g. Training deacons and members for personal evangelism includes many elements:
 - i. THE CORRECT USE OF THE WITNESSING SITUATION. Though this might seem to be a mechanical approach to some, it is important that people are witnessed to in situations where they can both concentrate on and take in what they are hearing. A situation that is too noisy, where there are too many other distractions, where both the time and the place are not convenient for the one being witnessed to (e.g. mealtime, during working hours, etc) or where the witnessing is taking away from things which are very important to that person or family would not be appropriate.
 - ii. THE COMPLETE AND CORRECT USE OF THE SCRIPTURES in both winning and discipling the ones being reached.
 - (1) Since the false cults are working everywhere and make a pretense of using the Scriptures in winning converts to their teachings, it is doubly important that those being sent out with the Truth know how to correctly use the Scriptures in their witnessing so that clear distinctions are also made between the True and the false.
 - (2) It is important that those hearing the Gospel understand that what they are being told is not simply the teaching of men or of churches or human logic, but that these things are from God Himself and must be accepted.
 - (3) It is important, as the Evangelism Explosion approach emphasizes, that Scripture also be memorized, though it is equally important to be able to point out key Scriptures

directly from the Bible to those being reached.

- iii. The personal testimony of the one doing the witnessing is an important part of reaching lost people.
 - (1) This personalizing of the Gospel makes it seem alive and real to the ones being reached. It has actually affected the life of the one doing the witnessing in a significant way and can do the same for the one being reached.
 - (2) It is also a "non-threatening" way to share the Gospel because it does not confront the person immediately so that he guards himself against any further truth being shared.

- iv. The presentation of the clear Scriptural requirements for those coming to Christ for salvation, beginning with *why does everyone needs a Savior?*
 - (1) This shares the important truth of the sinful nature of everyone in the world, their lost condition before God and the certainty of their judgment and eternal punishment if this sin is not dealt with.
 - (2) Some have sought to minimize this part of the Gospel presentation with the argument that it will only frighten some people away and that only the love of God should be emphasized.
 - (3) However, the Scriptures are very clear (SEE: John 3:36; Romans 3:9-19; Ephesians 2:1-3; 2:11, 12) that unless this truth is taught and understood and accepted, there is no point in talking about the GRACE (SEE: Ephesians 2:4-10) and MERCY of God since God's Grace and Mercy is based on an urgent need which needs to be met in the human heart. It even takes away from the meaning of the word SAVIOR if there is nothing to be saved from.

- v. WHO is that Savior, what are His qualifications and what did He do to make our salvation possible?
 - (1) The Lord Jesus Christ is the Way to heaven (John 14:6)
 - (2) The Deity of Christ is an important part of this sharing of Truth. If He is not God, then He lacks the power and ability to die for the sins of the world and to save us from or sins. The truth of this clearly stated again and again in such books as The Gospel of John, Colossians 1 and 2; Hebrews 1 and 2 and others.
 - (3) His sinlessness is also important.

- (4) His sacrificial death on the cross, as predicted in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament.
 - (5) His resurrection, ascension to heaven and His present position of power and authority.
- vi. Why is He ALONE the means of salvation?
- (1) SEE: John 14:6; Acts 4:12
 - (2) This distinction is important because the Catholics and many others claim that He is the Savior, BUT that other things are also necessary for a person to be saved such as the Sacraments, certain other historical characters (Mary) and even affiliation with a certain church.
- vii. What Is REQUIRED for One to Be Saved from Their Sin?
- (1) REPENTANCE, Acts 2:37, 38
 - (2) FAITH in Christ Alone as Savior and Lord. Ephesians 2:8, 9.
- viii. What FURTHER STEPS will God expect of them once they are saved so that they will live victoriously and have His favor and blessing on their lives?
- (1) Although there are many who insist that this teaching should not come in the initial presentation of the Gospel, it is important that they understand the full meaning of the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian?"
 - (2) They need this understanding from the very beginning so that they are not left with the wrong impression about what their new relationship with Christ will involve.
 - (3) It is important that they understand that these steps of following the Lord are not the MEANS of their salvation but are the PROOF of their salvation (SEE: I John)
 - (4) This teaching includes:
 - (a) What will His salvation mean for them both in this life and in eternity?
 - (b) What changes will God bring about in their lives? (SEE: II Corinthians 5:17)
 - (c) What are their own responsibilities in this relationship with Him?

- h. THE TRAINING PROGRAM for personal evangelism can either be done in a Bible School setting or by the local church in its regular program.**
 - i. It is most often best that the local church itself conduct the program so that it knows exactly what is being taught and that the work of those who take the course directly relates the teaching to the outreach of the local church
 - ii. It is also important to note that this training has to be an ongoing program in which, after they have been trained in the basics of evangelism, they will continue to deal with the problems and questions they face as they actually put the teaching into practice. Thus, it will also continue to evaluate, encourage and advise those in the program.
 - iii. Training will include observing and learning from others who witness by accompanying more experienced soul winners.

Training in Home and Foreign Missions.

- 1. Identifying Missions and missionaries in today's world.**
 - a. The missionaries sent out by the local church would be the most important subjects for such studies.
 - b. The fields in which they labor would be the main fields of interest.
- 2. The urgent necessity for this training**
 - a. Since the deacons are the ones who usually administer the Missions Programs of the local church, it is vitally important that they be trained in this area.
 - b. It is not enough to simply take the word of the missionaries they send out that things are going well, that the local church has no need of concern or worry about what is going on in the field or how the missionary conducts himself and that the only responsibility of the local church is to give and to pray for the missionary. They trust their missionaries, but they are following the principle of ACCOUNTABILITY in receiving such training.
 - c. The Lord's money is being used in the support of that missionary, and the people, in giving those funds, trust the leaders to properly and wisely use them and to administer the program effectively.
 - d. The assurances of the MISSIONARIES themselves may hide the fact that there may be serious problems in the missionary's own life or in the work he is doing which need the oversight of the local church.
 - i. The missionary himself may be discouraged and defeated in his

- own personal life either from internal spiritual problems, from family problems, from difficult adjustments to the culture and situation in which he is working or from the problems of the work itself, and there may be an urgent need for encouragement, counsel, personal visits to the missionary or other strong action.
- ii. The work itself may be floundering either from the methods the missionary is using, from tensions which he finds himself unable to deal with, from sharp divisions among missionaries or in the work that missionary has launched or from outside forces working to stop the work.
- e. It is not the desire of the local church to be oppressive in the way they check on their missionaries and deal with their problems, but rather, in a loving and spiritual way, to help the MISSIONARIES see that they are ACCOUNTABLE to the local church and that it is the God-given responsibility of the missionaries to accept this and for the local church to do what God expects them to do.
- i. The Scriptural example of this would be Paul's own acceptance of this principle of ACCOUNTABILITY in reporting back to the Church of Antioch (SEE: Acts 14:25-28) and in appearing before the Council of Jerusalem (SEE: Acts, chapter 15; 21:17-25).
 - ii. Not only are the missionaries who are sent out by the local church ACCOUNTABLE, but this principle of ACCOUNTABILITY also applies to the MISSIONS AGENCIES which send them out. There are some missions agencies which are aware of the problems missionaries are going through but they do not inform or consult with the local churches which have sent them out. These agencies have to accept the truth that the Scriptural responsibility for sending them still rests with the Church.
- f. **AREAS OF ACCOUNTABILITY** by both missionaries and missions agencies.
- i. Both pre-field and post-field (furlough) interviews of the missionaries either by the Missions Committee of the Church or by the entire Board of Deacons. This is both a time of report and a time of loving but candid questioning.
 - ii. Visits to the Mission Headquarters of the sending agency to talk with the field administrators and other missions personnel.
 - iii. Clear reports concerning the distribution and use of funds sent by the Church according to the stated purposes for these funds.
 - iv. Regular candid reports by the missionary to the local church concerning both the missionary and his family and also the work that he is doing on the field. Without prying into very personal matters they have no right to know, the church needs to know exactly how to pray for their missionaries.
 - v. In the area of Home Missions, in particular, there may also be

- vi. Regular candid reports by the missions agencies to the local church concerning developing problems the church needs to be aware of, actions being taken by the agency in regard to the missionaries and other critical matters which are the rightful business of the local church.

3. How to Train the Deacons in the Area of Missions

- a. They need training in Missions Philosophy, which gives them the knowledge of New Testament Missions, missionary principles and practices, problems missionaries face on the home and foreign field, reasons for failure in missionaries' lives and work and spiritual principles for dealing with missionaries.
- b. They need training in the relationship between the church, the missionaries and the missions agency the missionary is under.
- c. They need training in missionary administration. This includes both the financial side of their administration and the personal side of overseeing their missionaries.
- d. They need training concerning the types of cultures and people their missionaries work with so that they better know how to evaluate the various situations in which their missionaries work and how to evaluate the work being done in those situations.
- e. They need training in spiritually dealing with crisis situations, in counseling prospective and veteran missionaries, in understanding missionary needs and in taking appropriate spiritual action when that is called for.
- f. They need training in how to challenge and lead the church itself in supporting the missionaries financially, in being involved in encouraging and upholding them, in praying for them and in the responsibilities of the members for the challenging and raising up of the young people from their own church as future missionaries.

4. Areas of Direct Involvement of the Deacons in Missions

- a. They need themselves to be vitally concerned with the whole subject of missions, so that this is a heart burden to them which involves their concern, enthusiasm, prayer and personal efforts to support the missionaries and the missionary program of the Church.
- b. They need to actively promote missions in the church by every means possible

so that all ages of the members are involved, whether children, young people or adults. Some churches "adopt" a missionary each week with special emphasis upon their lives and ministries, have certain S.S. classes be responsible for one or more missionary families, send special gifts and packages to the missionaries and other forms of reminding the members constantly of their responsibilities to the missionaries.

- c. They need to plan and carry out regular missionary activities in the Church which include regular visits by missionaries, the presentation of missionary needs and burdens in the services, special prayer meetings for missionaries and even voice communications with missionaries on the field.
- d. They need to plan and carry out annual missionary conferences designed so that they make a maximum impact on the Church.
- e. They need to plan special missions trips for the young people of long enough duration that their presence on the field they visit is both helpful and also challenging to the young people themselves as they learn what a mission field is like and what they would need to be in order to do such work.
- f. As deacons, they also can sometimes be directly involved in missions trips. Some churches send out teams of lay people to help build buildings, complete other projects and even have special ministries in the spread of the Gospel such as tract distribution, teaching, personal evangelism and other such ministries. As suggested before, they also will be observing, encouraging and gaining fresh insights into how they can more effectively administer the missionary program of the Church as they directly work with missionaries on a field.

Training in How to Spiritually, Unitedly, Effectively and Practically Work with the Pastoral Staff and with Each Other in the Building up of the Church

1. The Problem of Reaching the Full Potential of the Church

- a. Many churches find that they have been wonderfully blest with talent in their midst, which, if it were most effectively and spiritually used for the Glory of the Lord and the spread of His Truth, would produce dynamic and effective programs in the local Church. However, they find that, with all this potential, these results never really fully come to pass. No matter what they seek to do, they never reach this potential.
 - i. In many churches, the deacons do not work well under authority and carry on a constant struggle with the pastor for the "control" of their churches. Rather than having a team relationship with the pastor where each one is doing the work God has assigned to him, they compete with each other and their spiritual energies are drained so that good results do not come as they should.
 - ii There is also the problem in many churches of clashes between

personalities in the leadership of the Church. Resentment against each other and against the pastoral staff builds up so that there is constant tension in the meetings of the deacons and in the overall work of the Church.

- iii. In many churches, deacons seek to gather followings after them, thus splitting the church into schisms. Was deacon involvement possibly the basis for the division in the Corinthian Church in which there were at least three different groups in the church following the ones who had taught them (SEE: I Corinthians 1:11-13; 3:1-5, 23)? Since these men, Paul, Apollos and Peter, were not then on the scene and would not even have supported these divisions, it seems likely that some of the deacons themselves were leading these schisms.
- iv. In many churches the deacons are so strong in their control over the pastor that they even determine what he can and cannot preach and teach. They would never permit him to preach on any subject which might expose their own personal needs or go against what they are doing and so the pastors are afraid of their action against him if he dares to "step over the line" in their preaching and teaching. He only preaches and teaches "safe" subjects which would not offend them. This problem affected the relationship between Paul and Corinth.

- b. Until these spiritual problems are taken care of and the various leaders of the Church are in the right relationship with each other and the work of God, there will be little prospect for significant advances in the work of the Church.

2. The Nature of the Training They Need:

- a. There needs to be strong teaching on the importance God places on SPIRITUAL UNITY in His work. This means that any efforts to divide the work by competition, tension between personalities or efforts to gain a following is condemned by God and will be judged by Him. (SEE: 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Eph 4:1-6; Phil 2:1-8).
- b. There needs to be strong teaching *on their proper role and function* in the Church. The importance of their Biblical role and function in the church needs to be stressed together with the danger of stepping outside that calling God has given them to interfere in the role and function of others. This is illustrated in Numbers 16:1-40 where some of the ELDERS who were appointed as spiritual advisors and encouragers of Moses may have been among those who joined in the rebellion of Korah against his leadership.
- c. There needs to be strong teaching on the subject of *the support and encouragement of the pastor himself* and his ministry. For instance, in many churches several of the deacons will come in to the office of the pastor before each service to pray with him. In some churches, certain deacons will meet for prayer during the entirety of each service to uphold that meeting in prayer, with special emphasis on the preaching of the pastor.
- d. There needs to be strong teaching on the principle of *willing and humble*

submission to authority, pointing out that, though they work under the pastor, the pastor himself is under the authority of both God and the local church and is not a dictator over the Church whom they should resent and resist. Rebellion against authority is a sin and will be judged by God. (SEE: James 4:7_10)

- e. There needs to be strong teaching on HOW they can most effectively carry out their functions as deacons as they devote themselves to their tasks and work with others. We assume that elected deacons will know this already, but this may not be always true.
- f. There needs to be strong teaching on both caring about and dealing with *problems in the personal lives of the members*.
 - i. Many churches have a "DEACONS CARE" program in which each deacon is assigned part of the membership of the church for special attention to their personal needs. Some needs are caused by grief and sorrow, or by financial problems or other reverses in their lives over which they have no control, or by habits in their lives over which they have no victory, or by spiritual laxity in their lives which affects both their walk with the Lord and their participation in the work of the Lord or other personal problems.
 - ii. This "DEACONS CARE" program involves personal attention to the needs of the members through phone calls, home visitation, follow up work and counseling. While some deacons have a natural gift in these areas, they do need to take training in carrying out this program effectively.

Suggestions for Implementing a Local Church Training Program

1. From our consideration of the great number of areas where training is necessary and the limited time most deacons would have in being part of our training programs, it is obvious that any program which is set up is going to have to be a long term program extending over many years. Because of the constant need for enrolling new ones in it, such a program may never really have an ending.
2. These deacons will mostly be married men with children. Any program which takes away from their God-given responsibilities to their wives and children would not be God's will.
 - i. Studies in these areas will have to be planned to fit in with the time they have available.
 - ii. If the wives of the deacons would find some of the areas of study important and practical, this would be another reason for them to be limited to times during the week when both husband and wife would be free to come.
3. **Some POSSIBLE APPROACHES to this training program.**

- i. Some churches have **formally organized LOCAL CHURCH TRAINING PROGRAMS.**
 - a) These are purposely not designed to compete with regular established Bible Institutes in the area of like faith and practice. Rather, they recognize that most laymen will never be able to attend the courses of regular Bible Schools. If their own local church does not provide such training, they will remain untaught.
 - b) One of the main purposes for such a program is to give the deacons and other lay leaders in the Church the training they urgently need to do their work in the church spiritually and effectively, but they are open to other lay people, both men and women, as well.
 - c) Sometimes, several local churches will cooperate in offering these programs, with each participating local church contributing both the personnel and finances to carry them on.
 - d) These programs have sharply defined goals and the courses are designed and taught with these goals in mind.
 - e) Those in these programs are taught in structured classes with set requirements, whose requirements must be met, including exams, if they are to be successfully completed.
 - f) Several courses may be taught at one time so that those who have the time may take their training at a faster pace while those with limited time will take only one course at a time.
 - g) The classes can either be taught by the pastoral staff, by laymen from the church specifically trained in these areas or by those brought in from the outside to conduct them.
 - h) Certificates are given for each course completed. Because these programs are carried out over such long periods of years, a "graduation ceremony" may never be held, though some churches do set goals for the completion of their training program which make such ceremonies possible.
 - i) After some years have passed, most of the courses will be repeated for the sake of new ones entering into the program. Through repeating these courses, the church can also learn how to make them more practical and effective.
 - j) One of the important goals of such training is that, when a student has completed a course, he will be expected to put that training into practice immediately in the work of local church, and such opportunities will be available to him.
- ii. Other local churches use **A LESS STRUCTURED APPROACH**, but their

goals are just as definite.

- a) Some of the courses may be taught in Sunday School classes, in the preaching and teaching of the pastor or in special seminars which are held. Sometimes a pastor may also be teaching a special class during the Sunday School hour, which draws students from other classes for a quarter at a time.
- b) Other courses may be taught in more structured classes on a week night or on Saturday afternoons.
- c) However they are taught, the goals of these classes must clearly be set forth and the contents of each course must be complete so that it meets the recognized needs of the students.
- d) The requirements of each course will not be as strictly set forth and a final exam may not be possible, but certificates are often given for those who have attended a minimum number of classes or preaching and teaching sessions.
- e) These courses may still draw on outside help where needed.
- f) These courses also seek to put to work those who have studied in them so that the value of the training they have received is not lost by inaction.
- g) Whether these courses are highly structured or not, their main purpose is still to give the deacons and other lay workers in the church the vital training they need to make them effective and fruitful workers.

Potential Areas of Active Ministry for Deacons

Their Ministry in the Affairs of the Local Church Itself

- 1. This was the emphasis in the appointment of those first deacons in the Jerusalem Church of the New Testament in Acts, chapter 6. The local church itself had needs WITHIN the church and these highly qualified men were chosen specifically to meet those needs.
- 2. In the local church today, the needs WITHIN the local church body of believers can include:
 - a. The ministry of helping, encouraging and upholding the Pastor in his role as leader of the flock, and steadfastly standing with him in spiritual ways as he upholds the Truth.
 - b. Meeting with the Pastor and his staff in handling the affairs of the Church

- c. Carrying out the designated responsibilities assigned to each deacon. In many churches, the various functions and activities of the church are divided among the deacons, with one or more deacons being responsible for each function or activity. e.g. Christian Education, Missions, Buildings and Grounds, Visitation, The Deacons Fund, Finances, etc.
 - d. Watch Care of the members of the church.
 - e. Discipling new believers as they grow in the faith.
 - f. Active participation in the teaching ministries of the Sunday School.
 - g. Help with Young Peoples' programs and activities
 - h. AWANA Programs, DVBS and other special programs of the church.
3. Participation in one or more of these ministries will be expected of the deacons and they will be accountable to the pastor and church for them.

Their Ministry in the Growth and Outreach of the Local Church.

- 1. Without neglecting the administrative responsibilities which are assigned to them, it is also important that they have a spiritual vision and burden for the growth and outreach of the local church. Like Philip and Stephen, they accept the spiritual challenges which such growth and outreach present and devote themselves to them.
- 2. Some of the areas where God would give them such challenges would be:
 - a. Speaking in prayer meetings, men's' meetings and at special occasions of the Church as their gifts and talents permit them to do this.
 - b. Heading some of the departments of the local church which have do with reaching out to the community as a whole such as the regular visitation program, canvassing of the neighborhoods, hospital ministries, nursing home ministries, etc.
 - c. Teaching special Soul Winning Classes and other special classes which emphasize how the ordinary members can better reach out to their friends and neighbors.
 - d. Leading and teaching Home Bible Studies where the members of the church invite in their Christian and non-Christian friends.
 - i. The deacon would be responsible both for teaching the Truth of the Scriptures, leading the unsaved members of the class to the Lord and establishing and strengthening the ties of the class members to the work of the local church.

- ii. If all of the deacons could eventually be involved in such ministry, it would not only greatly multiply the outreach of the Church, but it also would not put too much burden or strain on any one deacon.
- iii. These home studies can be carried out in a very informal and low key manner.

Their Ministry in the Oversight of the Missions Program of the Local Church

1. The OVERSIGHT of the Missions Program of the Church is a very vital ministry for the deacons, relieving the pastor of the time-consuming nature of that work. It is also likely that the background of the deacons appointed to this task might more readily fit them for the task than the background of any of the pastoral staff.
 - a. They would have far more financial expertise than any on the pastoral staff, making the use of the funds wiser and more careful.
 - b. They are used to looking at the success or failure of the work in which they make their living and would bring this wisdom also to the work of the Missions of the Church. It is not the desire of any church to have a critical attitude toward their missionaries, but it is important that the missionaries be proven to be fulfilling the Biblical standards God would expect of them, and it would be the responsibility of the deacons to see that that is what is taking place.
2. Just as important is the possibility that some or all of the deacons, at some point in their service in this position, could actually make trips to the Mission Fields where their missionaries labor, both to evaluate and to participate in the ministry there.
 - a. In the past forty or fifty years, as transportation has become easier and more affordable, more and more churches are moving in this direction.
 - b. Missionaries also welcome such participation as long as the deacons who come do not overly burden the missionaries or discourage them through criticism and second-guessing.
 - c. Those who go must go with a willingness to learn and to fit into the work on that field in any way they might be used.
 - i. On most fields, they must assume that the missionary knows both the culture and the best means of doing the work better than they do and that they are altogether under his teaching while they are there.
 - ii. They also must accept that they are under the complete authority and direction of the missionary while they are there.
3. Most foreign fields today involve extremely sensitive situations which even the missionaries who have worked there many years have had to constantly adjust to. This will even more be true for those who come for short term ministries. One mistake or show of lack of sensitivity to the situation on the part of a visiting worker could cause great misunderstanding and irreparable harm to the work. In

such a case, it would be better for him never to have come there at all. Even a skilled visiting evangelist or pastor must submit to the authority of the missionary.

- a. In places like China and other "closed" countries, this authority would have to extend even to where they can go, what they can say, what methods they will use, and what they can do while there. Some would find this unduly restrictive, but they must trust the judgment of the missionaries involved.
- b. This would make it difficult for anyone who is not used to working under the authority and direction of someone else.
- c. Such trips must be taken very seriously. This would include not only the necessity for them to have a clear sense of purpose and dedication in going there, but also there must be enough time allotted by them to such a visit to make it worth while.
- d. In most cases, they must also accept the climatic, cultural and work conditions they are going to face on these fields. Most people who visit mission fields dreaming of exotic things to see and do and ideal circumstances in which to work end up very disillusioned.
- e. The financing of such trips might be a problem to some. If such a trip is carefully planned and carried out, it might well be a worthy missionary project of the church these deacons represent, with the deacons themselves contributing part of the cost.

Their Ministry of Helping to Launch Branch Works of That Local Church

1. **The use by the Jerusalem Church** of their deacons, especially Stephen and Philip, though forced by the circumstances of the time, give us the example of what is possible for churches that spiritually are seeking to do all they can for the Lord.
 - a. It is true that some churches only have the goal of becoming "super churches," with everything being concentrated on and channeled to the local church in one particular location. Even if "branch works" are begun, they will forever be counted as part of the "mother church" and will never become independent local churches.
 - b. However, many other churches have had a vision to never become so large. Instead, when the growth of their church reached a certain point, they turned their attention to sending out some of their deacons and members to begin branch works that would someday become independent local churches.
 - i. In the 50's and 60's of the 20th Century, this was the vision of the Immanuel Baptist Church of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, under the leadership of Pastor Tom Younger.

- a) This was a thriving church in the heart of Ft. Wayne under splendid leadership.
 - b) Rather than building this into a "super church" as some were already doing, God gave him the vision to begin 15 new churches in ten years in the suburbs and communities around Ft. Wayne.
 - c) He launched these new works by sending out some of his own members to serve as the nucleus for the new work. Since he had a city church, the ones he sent out probably came from the area where the new work was to be located. Probably a deacon from his own church helped to spearhead the beginning of the work, but he also used recent graduates from Bible Schools as home missionaries supported by his church.
 - d) The express purpose of sending out these members and launching this work was to see a new church established in a certain time frame in that locality, with its own pastor and carrying its own responsibilities.
 - e) Whether or not he actually reached the number of branch works he had originally set as his goal, a number of new works were established, a couple of which became even stronger independent Baptist Churches than the "mother church."
- ii. The Bethesda Baptist Church of Brownsburg, Indiana, under Pastor Don Tyler, also had such a vision and launched a number of new independent Baptist Churches by such means.
- c. **The churches thus established** remained in good fellowship with the churches that had launched them, but were independent of their control once they were properly organized, self-supporting and able to carry on their own affairs.
 - d. **On foreign fields, such as the Philippines and Hong Kong**, there are countless examples of local Baptist Churches with the same vision and the same results as God has blest this vision.
 - i. **In Hong Kong**, there are examples of churches that have begun as many as six or seven new churches by using these same methods of church planting. Because of the true spiritual motivation and zeal which accompanied these efforts, they found that the launching churches quickly grew again to the size they had before they sent out their members to start these new works.
 - ii. **In the Philippines**, this example of successful church planting has been followed all over the Islands resulting in hundreds of new churches being started.

- a) Although much valuable church planting work has been done by American missionaries with support from America, these church planting efforts by established local churches have largely been supported by Filipinos.
- b) Some American missionaries have even worked under Filipino churches in such efforts in places like Davao City on the Island of Mindanao in the Philippines.

2. There are several things to note about the launching of branch churches:

- a. They will involve considerable sacrifice for the churches that have such a vision, both in the finances needed to launch these efforts and in the personnel they will need to send out to provide the nucleus for the new work. If they are not willing to make such sacrifices, then that vision can never come to fruition and any efforts there will be wasted.
- b. They are to be launched in needy and strategic areas outside the area of the sending church, where there is no effective witness of the Gospel and where there are signs that the time is right for the launching of such a new work.
 - i. It is important that these areas not be chosen where the new work will result in competition with other Fundamental Baptist Churches, will draw away their members or duplicate their work. That would be unethical and a poor spiritual testimony to the community in which the new work is to be launched.
 - ii. It is also important that the area to be chosen be far enough away from the "mother church" so that it will not stifle the efforts of the members of that church in reaching their own surrounding area and slow the continued progress of their own work.
 - iii. It is also important that there be some Christian contacts in that area or some unsaved people in the area who have expressed an interest, who will be of help in launching the work. The presence of such contacts will be apparent in any preliminary survey of the area.
- c. Since the pastoral staff of the sending church will have their own heavy responsibilities and the finances of the sending church may not be sufficient to support a full time worker, in each branch work spiritually qualified and trained deacons may have to be the means of leading the new work in its beginnings.
 - i. Because of the training they have received, they have, under the supervision of the pastoral staff of the sending church; they will possess the ability to do what needs to be done in these beginning stages of the work.

- ii. It might even be possible to use a TEAM of deacons and their families to work together in this new work, with one of them serving as the leader of the new work.
 - iii. The deacon(s) assigned to the new work will lead the others in visitation, canvassing, personal evangelism, discipling of new believers and other steps they will need to take.
 - iv. The deacons and others, who are working with them, will need to be committed to stay with the work at least through all the stages of its beginning, its growth and its final organization as a local church with its own full time leader. For them to lack such commitment would undermine and discourage those who are to remain as part of that new work.
 - v. Once the work is ready to be organized as a functioning local church, the deacons assigned to help launch the work will then have the option of deciding whether they will remain with that work to work with its growth, stability and future life, OR of turning the leadership of the new work over to others and returning to the sending church and resuming their work there.
 - vi. There is no reason why some deacons who choose to return to the sending church, once the new work has been organized and is functioning properly as an independent local church, cannot be used again and again through the years in launching such work.
- d. If some of the members of the church are from that area, their first meetings can be held in the home of one of the families or in the home of one of the Christian contacts they located in their preliminary survey of the area.
 - e. When the work is spiritually strong and united, there are enough faithful believers to constitute a viable local body of believers and the believers are also fully supporting the new work financially, under the guidance of the sending church a constitution can be drawn up, a membership established and a local church organized.
 - f. When the new church becomes strong, it will be expected that they too will be an outreaching church and that this process of multiplication will continue as they themselves have the vision and determination to be used of God in the same way.

Conclusions

1. What all of this suggests is that the presence in the Church of spiritually qualified and spiritually trained deacons offers the Church tremendous potential both for growth and for outreach for the Lord.

2. The standards, whether for their qualifications, their training or their use, remain the same as they are clearly laid out in the Scriptures, both through Scriptural teaching and through the example of men like Stephen and Philip.
3. Each local church, meeting the standards set forth in the Word of God, should seek to maximize the use of their deacons by exploring every possible avenue for their use, avoiding the temptation to simply hoard them for use only in their own work. The churches which have been cited, in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, Brownsburg, Indiana, the Philippines and Hong Kong, are examples of what spiritual churches can accomplish when they get vision from the Lord to do everything they can to further His work.
4. The question needs to be raised: What about smaller churches that may not have a large number of deacons to be used for such work or who may lack the finances to carry out all these ideas?
 - a. Though it is true that the full pattern concerning deacons that has been suggested might fit larger churches in better ways, it needs to be emphasized that ALL churches, of any size, can do more than they are now doing to further the work of the Lord.
 - b. Though smaller churches might be able only to accomplish the most simple forms of some of these suggestions and might never advance to the use of their deacons in all the ways which have been suggested, all churches need to start with what they have, commit all the resources they have to the Lord and then proceed with what God leads them to do.
 - c. In any church, large or small, it is important that the deacons that are chosen by the Church are men who are spiritual enough to carry out their God-given administrative responsibilities in the Local Church in ways pleasing to God, and who are so yielded to Him that they will also accept and carry out the challenges God gives to them in reaching out with the Gospel and helping to further the work of God.
 - d. This also requires that the leadership of each church both has the willingness and the vision to carry out all that is needed to help their church reach its full potential for God.
 - e. All of the parts of such a program must follow Scriptural patterns and principles in order for it to have the blessing of God.
 - f. Whatever is accomplished in carrying out this program of maximizing the talents and gifts of the deacons, the glory should still return to the Lord as the work of God grows and multiplies.

