

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DEACON?



*Devotions
for Deacons*



- **Faithfully support** those with financial difficulties.
- **Provide hope and encouragement** through words and deeds.
- **Seek out opportunities to serve** the vulnerable, elderly, sick and bereaved.
- **Offer practical assistance** where it is needed (i.e. rides, fixing

JUSTICE

"For I, the Lord, love justice." Isaiah 61: 8a

- **Offer hospitality** to victims of injustices (i.e. refugees, aboriginal people).
- **Encourage participation** in justice-related ministry and advocacy (i.e. letter writing)
- With church members, **discover** practical, just, and sustainable **services** in our communities.
- **Provide ministry and advocacy**

suggestions on behalf of the vulnerable in our communities.

COMPASSION

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all " Gal. 6:10a

- **Discover the neighbourhood** of your church with its assets and needs.
- **Partner**, where possible, with existing community services.
- **Serve your community** with ministries which build trusting, meaningful relationships.
- Always be able to "give an answer for the hope that you have."

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON?

STEWARDSHIP

"from the one who is entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Luke 12:48b

- **Inspire people to give** generously of their resources.
- **Invite others to participate** in diaconal opportunities to multiply ministry.
- **Provide awareness of opportunities** for service.
- **Educate the congregation** about the financial offerings and denominational ministry of our churches.



COMMUNITY MINISTRY

"Always be prepared to give an answer...for the hope that you have." 1 Peter 3:15

Much More Than Needs



Scripture Reading: Mark 12:41-44

Jesus is a gifted teacher. He knows His audience and understands their context. When He tells a parable, He relates it to their ordinary lives. He talks of farming and baking. With Jesus, the engravings on a coin become an object lesson. And seemingly insignificant children demonstrate something of the Kingdom.

So when Jesus enters the temple in Jerusalem, the disciples can anticipate that He will have something to say about what He sees and encounters.

Just beyond and through the gate, Jesus comes to the place for offerings. Here He sits down opposite the offering boxes. Together Jesus and His disciples watch as people give. The wealthy file by, making a show of "throwing" in their "large amounts." And then comes the widow, with her two copper coins.

Just prior to this, Jesus had taught the crowds in the temple courts, denouncing the religious leaders for exploiting widows. The crowds had listened "with delight," but now there is more that Jesus wants

to teach. He has more to say about the widow. To Jesus, she is not simply a victim of exploitation.

We can quickly see where Jesus is going with this: the widow's "mites" are proportionately more of a sacrifice for her than the large amounts easily given by the wealthy. But notice what Jesus does here. He doesn't simply focus on the relative value of the copper coins. Jesus implies that the woman's gift -everything she has -is evidence of her faith in God to provide. By giving everything, the widow is also expressing her dependence on God. Part of what Jesus is doing here is subtly shifting the object lesson from wealth to true value.

The widow is a victim of societal injustice. She might have only a little to give. But to Jesus, she is immensely valuable because of who she is and because of her faith in God.

Jesus has a way of doing this when He encounters people. Whether healing or teaching, He sees past the immediate need. Not that it isn't

important. But beyond the need, He sees a hurting person. An individual whom he cherishes and loves. Each person has immense value to Jesus. An untouchable leper is touched. A sick, marginalized woman is called "daughter." A crippled man is raised up, forgiven and healed. And what about when Jesus shares the intimacy of a meal with a despised tax collector? These are just some of the beautiful expressions of how relational and loving Jesus is.

And what a beautiful pattern this is for deacons. Each person we encounter, each person we hope to help is a person created in God's image and of infinite value. That person is not defined by his or her needs -even if that is all we can see initially. It will take some time and effort to see the things that Jesus saw effortlessly and immediately.

Deacons, learn to look for what your neighbours have to contribute. Learn to see them as Jesus sees them. By getting to know your neighbours, by learning about them and what they can contribute, you will empower them and affirm their dignity.

But continue to meet needs. That is still important. And, while doing that, consider the context -for there is much to learn there. Trust God to give you the courage to look deeper. To listen to a story. To turn away from judgement. To try and understand why a situation exists.

Love each person and, with God's help, allow them to become more to you than their circumstance or their need.

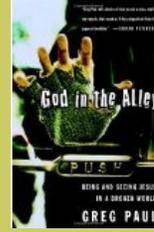
Pray continually.

Pray for God to bless you as you build relationships and pray that the Spirit will enable you to love your neighbour as Jesus loved.

Discussion:

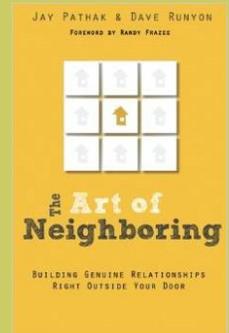
1. Discuss together or in small groups how your diaconate is currently showing love to its neighbour. Be specific.
2. Name 1 or 2 ways that your diaconate might become more intentional about loving your neighbours or seeing them as Jesus saw the people He encountered and helped.
3. Pray together that God will give you a heart like Jesus as you serve and love your neighbour.

Further Reading:



God in the Alley: Being and Seeing Jesus in a Broken World by Greg Paul

The Art of Neighbouring by Jay Pathak, Dave Runyon, Randy Frazee



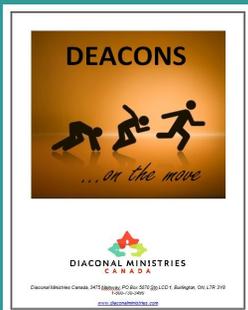
Other Books:

God Next Door by Simon Carey Holt

The Tangible Kingdom by Hugh Halter, Matt Smay

The Missional Quest by Brad Brisco, Lance Ford

Related Resources:



[Deacons on the Move \(section 3\)](#) provides exercises designed to help deacons think through how to love their neighbours, and develop a relationship with them.

[Guidelines for Benevolence](#) will also help a diaconate establish a framework for responding to people who request help.

These and other resources are available free on the Diaconal Ministries Canada website: www.diaconalministries.com

Other Links:

Community Assets: [The ABCD Institute](#)

[Wrap Around:](#) Shalem Mental Health Network

About Diaconal Ministries Canada:

We seek to inspire, equip and encourage deacons, churches and their partners as they join in God's transforming work in communities.



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