

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DEACON?



*Devotions
for Deacons*



DIACONAL MINISTRIES
CANADA

www.diaconalministries.com



- **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

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."

COMMUNITY MINISTRY

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

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.

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.





Devotion #6

Compassion



Scripture Reading: Luke 10:25-37

For the expert in the law, it is all about clearly defined rules. And he knows them, too. He knows them so well he thinks he can challenge Jesus. How sad that he completely misses the point. How sad that what fills his head fails to penetrate his heart. Jesus came to fulfill the law, to free him from the rules, and to give him eternal life. If he knew that, it would completely change everything. He would not stand there debating, either. He would be out doing.

Jesus' story about the Samaritan and the beaten man is a perfect example of how Jesus changes the rules. Does the expert see himself in the story? Can he recognize that he is also a "road crosser," like the priest and the Levite? Perhaps he should also see himself in the wounded man – someone with a different kind of wound. A man also in need of compassion.

There is only one way to respond to Jesus' final question. The expert is forced to answer in a way that must have made him squirm: the Samaritan –an outsider, an enemy –is the neighbor to the wounded man. Jesus has expertly tested the expert. There is nothing left to say.

Compassion, like that of the Samaritan's, cannot be about rules. Compassion must engage the heart. As love for our Heavenly Father deepens and broadens, compassion for our neighbour will flow out of that love. As we more and more understand what it is to receive grace, we will be grace-filled and will love our neighbour out of thankfulness.

Who is our neighbour? We answer with the expert that our neighbour is the one in need. But perhaps we should first see the need in ourselves. We are not so different from

our neighbour; the "wounds" may just look different, like the Samaritan. He may not have had external wounds but he was despised and marginalized in Jewish society. Let compassion come from those places of pain and weakness that we share.

And notice the kind of compassion Jesus offers is practical. The Samaritan happened to be on the same road as the man. He was thorough and generous in his help, but he helped within his means. The Samaritan took care of the man's wounds, but it meant paying the innkeeper to look after him beyond that initial care.

Similarly, we may look for opportunities to be compassionate where we are. There may be different places to serve, and some may ask us to go outside of our comfort zone. We must be thorough –not only looking to

immediate needs, but thinking deeper about the injustices that contribute to the context. We must also think about longer-term solutions for the people to whom we show compassion. And there may be an "innkeeper" whose partnership will help when it is beyond our capacity to respond further.

Jesus is practical. He turns a test around, and into an opportunity for instruction. The parable silences His accuser, but it can also teach so much about the compassion that Jesus Himself exhibited in His life and ministry. Praise God that in a small way each one of us, in our own context, may proclaim freedom from the rules, and allow our hearts to be engaged for the hurting, the mistreated and the marginalized.

How would your diaconate stand up to Jesus' test?

Practical Help

Discussion:

1. Reflect together on what it might mean to identify with the “wounded” -what compassion may look like when we recognize shared pain and brokenness.
2. Discuss the kind of practical help the Samaritan offered. Does that resonate with your work as deacons? Do you look for opportunities where you are and within your means? Do you seek out “innkeepers”?
3. Spend time in prayer, asking God to touch your hearts with compassion for the hurting and the lost.

Related Resources:



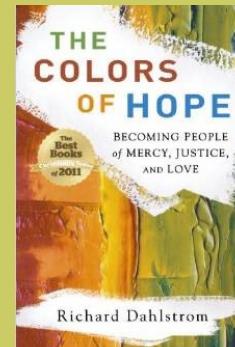
shalem

Mental Health Network

Shalem Mental Health Network has created a helpful tool for “building relationships through effective listening.” You can find this tool by clicking [here](#) (under “Guidelines for Caring with Compassion”) or by browsing the [Shalem website](#).

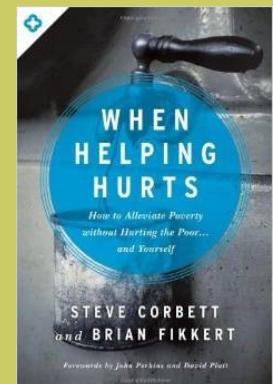
This and other resources are available free on the Diaconal Ministries Canada website: www.diaconalministries.com

Further Reading:



*The Colors of Hope:
Becoming People of
Mercy, Justice, and Love*
by Richard Dahlstrom

When Helping Hurts
by Steve Corbett and
Brian Fikkert



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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C A N A D A

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