



THE TEN BEATITUDES FOR DEACONS
(The Ordination of Deacons)
Acts 6:1-6

First Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC

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Today is a special day. Our worship is different. We ordain five persons as deacons to serve in our church. Our focus is on serving.

The Beatitudes of Jesus lift before us the high virtues of Christian living. The word “beatitude” comes from a Latin word which means “blessedness” or “happiness.” Today we draw on one of Jesus’ favorite methods of teaching—the use of beatitudes. Today I want to present ten beatitudes for deacons.

1. Blessed are deacons who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Deacons are individuals who have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ in a commitment of faith. They have followed Him as Lord; have experienced forgiveness of sins and rebirth. You acknowledge and affirm that genuine religion begins in your personal experience with Jesus Christ.

2. Blessed are deacons who have been chosen by the congregation.

An effective deacon is one who has not sought the office but has been chosen by his or her peers. The congregation has called you out from among the others to serve in a special way just as the early deacons were chosen as recorded in the Book of Acts. This congregation has needs which must be filled, and you have been selected and set apart to help meet those needs. Always remember that you have been chosen. It is an honor but it is also a great responsibility. Labor in this position with humility, knowing that you have been selected by your fellow church members.

3. Blessed are deacons who consecrate themselves in worship.

One of the most important things that you will do is to nurture your own spiritual life. To be an effective deacon you will want to be a growing Christian. Be open to new insights from God and be faithful in your worship attendance and in your own spiritual development. Set aside time to grow spiritually.

Many of you are like I am—you like to build log fires at this time of year. You know, of course, that you cannot have a fire without several pieces of wood touching each other. The hot coals of each log keep the others burning brightly. The contact of

one with the other is what gives the radiant heat. Our lives continue growing spiritually when we are in contact with the radiant, glowing presence of God. We need to make sure that that strong relationship continues. You cannot help others grow spiritually if you yourself are not progressing.

4. Blessed are deacons who are committed to showing compassion, concern and comfort.

Jesus used the word “deacon” to describe greatness. “Whoever would be great among you must be your ‘diakonos,’ (deacon) and whoever would be first among you would be slave of all.” (Mark 10:43- 44) The New Testament and early church make clear the functions of deacons. Deacons are to be a servant of Christ and His church. They are to assist the pastor in ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the congregation. In John 17 Jesus indicated His power was to be demonstrated through a towel and a basin which He picked up to wash the disciple’s feet. He had come to serve not to be served.

Some years ago, Emily and I attended the inauguration of Dr. Tom Graves as President of The Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Instead of a golden medallion as the school’s symbol of authority, Dr. Graves and the seminary faculty and trustees have chosen the towel. “The towel signifies the pathway of power for the Christian minister,’ states Dr. Tom Graves, ‘a pathway of humility and service.” The Christian minister and deacons are both called to be servants and not to be persons of authority.

In one of my churches where I was pastor, we had the practice at that time of active deacons being designated as “Deacon of the Week.” As needs arose in the week, the person who was “Deacon of the Week” sought to meet that person’s need. This usually focused on visitation in the hospital when some church member was having surgery, ill, had given birth to a child, had a death, or needed some kind of spiritual support, etc. One time a deacon named Dean Hodgson was the “Deacon of the Week,” and he got a phone call at about 2:00 in the morning from a church member who said she had just had a flat tire and wondered if he could come and assist her? Dean thought to himself, “Well, I’m “Deacon of the Week” and I guess I need to respond.” So he dressed and went to give the church member some assistance. When he arrived to change her tire, she was embarrassed because she thought she had called AAA for their service. But he changed her tire anyway.

A committed deacon will seek to minister to persons in our congregation. You will acknowledge that this is probably the most important responsibility you have. You are charged to be a minister to those persons in good and difficult times. You will reach out to them and show love, understanding and concern. You will help them as they grow in the faith. You will become pastor to them through your

devotion. Support them in good and bad times.

5. Blessed are deacons who cultivate the church community.

As an effective deacon you will seek to be a calming factor in our church community. You will seek to build up the community and not do it harm. You will always seek to be fair and confidential in the way you respond to others. You will listen to the concerns, hopes, dreams and needs of others and seek to do what is best for our community. You will not seek just what you want but you will strive to do what will enable this community to serve Christ most effectively.

6. Blessed are deacons who have consistent character.

You will champion high moral standards and values in your own life. What you say will be reflected in what you do. What you are will be demonstrated by the actions you live. A deacon can not say one thing and do another. In your business, recreation, home life, and in all your living, you will seek to follow Christ as your guide and to follow His high ideals.

A child noticed one day that a woman had her Catholic medallion showing outside of her blouse. Looking at the medallion, the young child remarked, "Your religion is showing." In a real sense our religion should always show. I hope it will be reflected in all of your life as a deacon.

7. Blessed are deacons who are cheerful and celebrative.

The church does not need more dismal, despondent, sad faced persons. We need to have those in leadership who have felt the contagious power of the God of joy and life. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." A deacon feels this inner joy and wants to share it with others. A deacon will be a happy force in the church community who will help build it up by love and grace. Through your attitude, concern and words you will seek to radiate joy and goodwill in this community.

8. Blessed are deacons who command respect.

Respect is not something that is automatically given; it has to be earned. It will be earned by your attitude, service, humility, love and devotion. The office of deacon itself commands a certain amount of respect but that respect will be enhanced by the high standards that you bring to it. May God give you strength and courage to live out the kind of life to which you have been called.

9. Blessed are deacons who have caught a vision.

If our church is to continue to follow Christ, we must not look back at where

we have been but to the future and where we can be as we follow Christ, who goes ahead of us. This church has a wonderful foundation but we must have a vision of what we can be as servants for Christ. We must have a vision of what this church can do in the days ahead. If we do not have this kind of vision then we continue to drift and do not move ahead into the future. Christ goes before us, let us follow Him.

10. Blessed are deacons who are commissioned to share the Good News.

Remember that you have been chosen, not simply to be honored, but to be a worker in this congregation. You are commissioned as an apostle, one who is sent, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. I hope that you will do this in your home, in your business, in your recreational pursuits and in all of your life. When the opportunity arises and can be done appropriately, I hope you will share with others the Good News of Jesus Christ by word, by deed and by your very manner as a person. May God enable you to do this.

These ten beatitudes are guidelines for deacons to serve the Lord they love more effectively. May God give you grace and strength to serve your Lord faithfully.■

PASTORAL PRAYER

Eternal God, we pause this day to set apart deacons in our church to serve You more effectively. We affirm their gifts and their commitment to You. Bless them and their families as they are set apart. Strengthen them to make our church more vital, loving, radiant, caring, serving and devoted to You.

May our desire to serve You be so strong that our life will be a continuous witness to Your love. May we be constant in our worship so we may grow in our faith. May we be faithful in our stewardship that Your work will be carried forward in this community and around the world. May our service and witness glorify Your name and draw others to Your church and experience Your love and redemption.

O God, we pray your blessings upon these persons as they are ordained today. Strengthen their commitment as they offer their gifts and ministry for you as deacons. Guide them to grow deeper in their own faith and help strengthen the faith of others. Anoint the gifts of each of them as they use them in Your service. May their lives model the love of Christ as they grow in faith and serve in His name.

As we set aside these deacons, we recommit ourselves to You as a congregation this day. Help us to make our Lord's way of service our way of serving You this day and all the days before us. We open our hearts and minds to You in this sacred hour, through Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.