

Monday, 10 June 2019 - Comment: This page ("Diaconate_Exegesis-and-Examples_HTML.html" or "Diaconate_Exegesis-and-Examples_PDF.pdf") is an email to former associate Pastor, Dr. Mark Bedwell, of my church, First Baptist Church at the Mall (Lakeland, Florida, U.S.A.), with an exegesis on the Diaconate, a VERY important subject: The diaconate, and how the church misinterprets in on two (2) points: First, the church restricts the definition of "deacons" to mean only people who take up collections or vote on some obscure committee (when THE BIBLE says that the definition is much larger), and secondly, the church has super-high standards for "low level" deacons," but almost NO standards for VERY HIGH-LEVEL (example: teaching-type) deacons.

Below, I make reference to another email, wherein I made a prophecy (which we now know came to pass). That email is titled: "Random-Prophecy_CAMEtoPASS_LOL_October2011_HTML.html" or "Random-Prophecy_CAMEtoPASS_LOL_October2011_PDF.pdf" and was, primarily, tips for a new ministry, based on Dr. Neil Clark Warren's book, "Finding the Love of Your Life: Ten Principles for Choosing the Right Marriage Partner." But, below, I only make reference to my (fulfilled) prophecy, and am including mention of it "for context." Speaking of "context"...

In this email (below), as with my other email (above), I don't change the names to protect the innocent (or guilty), but leave it as written, for context. While I was thinking of redacting the names, I decided against it for several reasons: First off, [#1] it's hard to redact, and secondly [#2], you, the reader, need context.

However, [#3] the key reason I'm leaving the names of real people is because there is Biblical precedent:

Luke, the disciple/apostle, when writing the book of Acts, called out "Demetrius, a silversmith," for his behaviour and sins, in how the silversmith complained that his business would suffer because Paul preached against idols. (See, e.g.,: Acts 19:23-28). Moreover, Paul, himself (see e.g.,: 2 Timothy 4:9-11) called out Demas: "10...For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me..." -- Remember, Luke and Paul wrote this about them contemporary to these men, meaning what I'm doing is not without precedent. While it's uncomfortable to "name names" of people who may get angry, I was both polite and truthful, and I need to keep these names included to preserve context for the reader: This "random prophecy" is referenced in a subsequent email on the diaconate (deacon) research -- **this email, here.**

Thus, based on the gravity of the matter, I must preserve context, as Biblical precedent demands. Indeed, to be fair, I don't even redact my **own** name, address, phone number, email address, and such. Nor am I correcting any spelling and/or grammatical typos I apparently made. So, I'm not playing favourites.

Gordon Wayne Watts, Editor-in-Chief, *The Register*

-----Original Message-----

From: Gww1210@aol.com

Date: Fri, 7 Sep 2012 00:13:07 -0400 (EDT)

Subject: Re: Pastor Mark: I am more well-rested & have finished my study...

To: mark.bedwell@fbclakeland.org

you're welcome, Pastor Mark -- glad I could be of some help -- and you are also a fast reader -- see you at prayer with Pastor Jay this Saturday @ 10am.!

Gordon

(PS: If you get time, please don't forget that marriage book is also a very helpful resource --and if you ever get bored --which is not likely as busy as u r -- there's always my infant soteriology book. :)

In a message dated 9/6/2012 11:53:51 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, mark.bedwell@fbclakeland.org writes:

Great read. Thanks for your study and input on this.

From: Gww1210@aol.com [Gww1210@aol.com]
 Sent: Thursday, September 06, 2012 11:16 PM
 To: Mark Bedwell
 Cc: Gww1210@aol.com; Gww12102002@yahoo.com; gww1210@gmail.com
 Subject: Pastor Mark: I am more well-rested & have finished my study...

Pastor Mark: Last email, I was sleep-deprived, and missed a lot of ground (sorry about that!), but here I will finish what I started. Remember where I said that real "Bible" deacons did MUCH more than merely wait on tables? Well, I've found ample Scriptural proof of that: Below the brief 'INTRODUCTION' and 'COMMON OBJECTIONS' sections is the more detailed 'APPENDIX' below, which has a fairly complete listing of Scriptural examples of deacons & their duties.

Indeed, 1 Cor 12:5 (NASB) lays down the general rule:

"And there are varieties of ministries ["diakonia" service or ministry – Strong's 1,248, the same word for the service deacons render], and the same Lord."

KEY FINDING: (Diversity of duties) Almost ALL of the 'deacons' specifically named in Scripture (and there were many!) were teachers, preachers, and even evangelists –All of the many deacons listed appear to be leaders in the church in manifold & diverse ministries, not merely "waiters of tables." (Although that did comprise a small minority of deacons in the Scripture.)

KEY FINDING: (Leadership) Anyone can visit a person in the hospital, or "wait tables" to feed & minister to widows, but NOT just anyone can be a servant-leader in the various ministries in the body of Christ.

*** INTRODUCTION: Key passage & brief commentary ***

1st Timothy 3:8-13 (NASB, with footnotes and Gordon Watts' commentary)

[Requirements / Qualification Standards for church Deacons]

8 Deacons ["Diakonos" - Strong's 1,249: Deacons, Servants, Ministers] likewise must be men of dignity, not [a]double-tongued, [b]or addicted to much wine [c]or fond of sordid gain, 9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons [let them "diakoneō" serve or minister: Strong's 1,247] if they are beyond reproach. 11 [d]Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Deacons ["Diakonos" - Strong's 1,249: Deacons, Servants, Ministers] must be husbands ["Aner" - Strong's 435, apparently, from which we get our word: "androgen" from the Greek: "andros": "Husbands" or "Men"] of only one wife ["Gune" - Strong's 1,135 from which we get the word "gynecology" – literally "woman"], and [e]good managers of their children and their own households. 13 For those who have served well as deacons [have "diakoneō" served or ministered: Strong's 1,247] obtain for themselves a [f]high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Official "NASB" Footnotes:

- a. 1st Timothy 3:8 Or: "given to double-talk"
- b. 1st Timothy 3:8 Literally: "not"
- c. 1st Timothy 3:8 Literally: "not"
- d. 1st Timothy 3:11 I.e. either deacons' wives or deaconesses

- e. 1st Timothy 3:12 Literally: "managing well"
- f. 1st Timothy 3:13 Literally: "good"

Gordon Watts' Commentary: Verse 8 does not say 'men' in the original Greek, but rather "Deacons likewise grave..." but it is taken as male, and not female, by the context of verse 12, which says that deacons must be a man of only one wife. Some scholars translate this to mean that deacons must be a "one-woman" type of man, and this is indeed grammatically acceptable. Some scholars have used this interpretation as evidence that divorced men can be deacons if they are 'reformed' and are 'faithful' to their current wife for a number of years, e.g., "1-woman" type of men. This may be so, but Pastor Steven's interpretation (still married to their first wife, never divorced) seems more reasonable to me in light of verse 12's admonition to be good managers of their families, which would seem to preclude a previously divorced and remarried deacon. Some have suggested that a "man of one wife" is speaking against polygamy, but as polygamy in the church was not a serious problem (at least I don't infer that), then a more likely explanation is that Pastor Steven's interpretation is correct. (Some scholars, even some in the Southern Baptist Convention, accept single men as deacons if they are celibate & virgin, since they would meet the "1-woman" type of man standard, but on this point, I am not certain, I admit.) Since the official NASB's footnotes accept the possibility for female deacons, and this translation is accepted by the very conservative Southern Baptist Convention, I accept it as a possibility, but on this point also, I admit that I'm not certain.

The standards a deacon were extremely high for several reasons: #1, as explained in the previous exegesis, practically all deacons were servant LEADERS, not merely servants.

Furthermore, I will add here: #2 – Looking at the "context" of the passage reveals that the Greeks and the Jews had "racial" conflict, not unlike "Arabs vs. Jews" or "Blacks vs. Whites," and therefore, any assistance given to the Greek widows would be suspected of bias unless men of high integrity, character, and reputation, were chosen to lead and oversee this ministry. Therefore, for reasons #1 and #2, above, I disagree with Matthew Henry's Commentary that says the standards were this high merely "because, though the office of a deacon be of an inferior degree, yet it is a step towards the higher degree; and those who had served tables well the church might see cause afterward to discharge from that service, and prefer to serve in preaching the word and in prayer."

Matthew Henry's logic is bad: If that be so, then we'd have similar standards for the people who sweep the floor or vacuum the carpet . . . NOT.

#3 – The office of the deacon had much more than "waiting on tables" when you look at all the examples of actual deacons.

*** COMMON OBJECTIONS ***

(1) However, what about the angels who ministered to Jesus in the wilderness temptation fast (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13, Strong's #1,247, rendering diakoneō action of ministering to Jesus)?

(2) Or the angels in Hebrews 1:14, who perform diakonia service, Strong's #1,248?

(3) Or Peter's mother (Matthew 8:15; Mark 1:31) who rendered ministry service (Strong's #1,247) to wait on Jesus & the disciples after she was healed of a fever?

(4) What about Martha who rendered diakonia service (Strong's #1,248) to the disciples and complained when her sister, Mary, left her to go worship Jesus in Luke 10:40?

(5) Or Mary Magdalene, who "diakoneō" served Jesus (Strong's #1,247) even though she was a woman who once had 7 demons in her?

(6) What about Phebe in Romans 16:1, who is named as a "diakonos" servant (Strong's #1,249), and called, in some translations, a "deacon" or "deaconess?"

(7) Or Matthew 20:26, which says that those who aspire to be great must be a “diakonos” servant, Strong's #1,249? Or John 2:5, where Jesus' mother said to the “diakonos” servants to do what Jesus said?

(8) What about Romans 12:7, which seems to distinguish diakonia service from teaching as distinct and different?

Some commenters would suggest that these prove that Strong's numbers 1,247 – 1,249 don't prove that Paul, Jesus, and the others, were, in fact, deacons, but is that true?? Let's look more closely at the Scriptures:

(1 and 2) The angels rendered deacon service (Strong's #1,247 and #1,248), but were not specifically named as 'deacons' (Strong's #1,249), and this is tenable, no less than how many people (including, for example, King Saul in I Samuel 10:11-2; 19:24) had prophesied but NOT named as “prophets.”

(3, 4, and 5) The same is true of Peter's mother, Martha, and Mary Magdalene). They were not actually named as a 'deacons.'

(6 and 7) These are a bit trickier, for Phebe and others are actually named as 'deacons.'

To answer the case of Phebe, we recall that the NASB, accepted by the conservative Southern Baptist Convention, did list in its notes one translation of I Timothy 3:11, and this seems tenable in light of the use of the word 'likewise,' which might refer to a similar office. But, just as likely, the 'likewise' might refer to the qualifications & standards, not the office itself, where women should 'likewise' be mature, like the deacons, even if the women can not hold this office. In the case of the servants working for Jesus' mother, in John 2:5, they were not performing service to the church, but rather, in a secular office, and this may excuse them from being 'deacons' in the church sense. However, in Matthew 20:26 and similar passage, it seems reasonable to infer that the 'servant' listed is, in fact, a deacon, a servant-leader, who “leads by example.”

(8) Lastly, what about Romans 12:7, which seems to distinguish diakonia service from teaching as distinct and different? That would seem to imply that teachers and deacons are 2 different things. However, it is more likely, in the context of the MANY Scriptures above, that teachers are listed as a particular type of deacon. That interpretation of Rom 12:7 makes the most sense, in the context of the full counsel of the Word of God, and in context with verse 5 just above: “And there are varieties of ministries [“diakonia” service or ministry – Strong's 1,248, the same word for the service deacons render], and the same Lord.” (1 Corinthians 12:5, NASB)

Last email, I was sleep-deprived, and missed a lot of ground, but here I will finish what I started:

Remember where I said that real “Bible” deacons did MUCH more than merely wait on tables? Well, I've found ample proof of that:

*** APPENDIX: A fairly 'Complete' listing of Scriptural examples of deacons ***

1 Corinthians 12:5 (NASB) [This lays down the general rule.]

5 And there are varieties of ministries [“diakonia” service or ministry – Strong's 1,248, the same word for the service deacons render], and the same Lord.

Below, I will add the missing examples, which I left out in my previous letter. [These are actual examples, to illustrate the actual Bible standards.]

Acts 6:1-11 (NASB) Choosing of the Seven

6 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving [Strong's #1,248, the daily “diakonia” service] of food. 2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve [Strong's #1,247, to

do ministry to “diakoneō” serve] tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry [Strong's #1,248, the “diakonia” service] of the word.” 5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. 6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

*** STEPHEN and PHILIP, and 5 others were deacons to do “ministry” of serving tables, while those mentioned in verse 4 promised to do “ministry” or “diakonia” service of The Word. So, BOTH groups were Biblical “deacons,” albeit in different areas.

2 Corinthians 9:12-13 (AMP)

12 For the service [Strong's #1,248, diakonia service] that the ministering [Strong's #3,009, rendering of this “Leitourgia” service or ministration] of this [offering] fund renders does not only fully supply what is lacking to the saints (God’s people), but it also overflows in many [cries of] thanksgiving to God.

13 Because at [your] standing of the test of this ministry [Strong's #1,248, this diakonia service], they will glorify God for your loyalty and obedience to the Gospel of Christ which you confess, as well as for your generous-hearted liberality to them and to all [the other needy ones].

*** PAUL performed some menial services here, collecting an offering, sort of like how Stephen & Philip did 'menial' service for the Greek widows in Acts 6.

Acts 12:25 (NASB)

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission [Strong's #1,248, their “diakonia” ministry or service], taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

*** BARNABUS and PAUL were deacons.

Acts 21:18-19

18 And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry [Strong's #1,248, through Paul's “diakonia” ministry or service].

*** PAUL was a deacon, and he mainly evangelised, we recall.

Romans 11:13-14 (NASB)

13 But I [Paul] am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry [Strong's #1,248, his “diakonia” ministry or service], 14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

*** PAUL was a deacon, and, again, his main ministry here was evangelism.

Romans 11:13 (KJV)

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

*** The KJV uses the word 'office' instead of 'ministry' or 'service' –making it clear that Paul held the OFFICE of a deacon, and did not merely perform diakonia service, as did some.

Colossians 4:17 (NASB)

17 Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry [Strong's #1,248, the “diakonia” ministry or service] which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

*** Some guy named ARCHIPPUS was a deacon. He was mentioned in Philemon 1:2 as a “fellow soldier” in the army of God, but his exact ministry is not stated. However, it was probably not merely “waiting on tables,” I'd say from the context.

2 Timothy 4:5 (NASB)

5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

*** TIMOTHY, according to Paul, was a deacon, whose specific “diakonia” ministry was that of evangelism.

* Acts 20:24 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

24 But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry (Diakonia, Strong's 1,248, which is “Diakonia service” or “ministry,” the same base word as Strong's 1,247 above) which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

* PAUL WAS A DEACON, if you use the Bible definition, looking only at the original Greek, which was the only inspired text.

* 1 Corinthians 3:5 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants (Diakonos, Strong's 1,249, e.g., 'deacons') through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

*** APOLLOS and PAUL WERE DEACONS. (According to the Bible, that is. Do we trust the Bible?)

Ephesians 3:7b (NASB)

"... I [Paul] was made a minister [Strong's #1,249, a "diakonos," e.g., a deacon], according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power."

*** PAUL was made a deacon.

Ephesians 6:21(NASB)

21 But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister [Strong's #1,249, a "diakonos," e.g., a deacon] in the Lord, will make everything known to you.

Colossians 4:7 (NASB)

All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister [Strong's #1,249, a "diakonos," e.g., a deacon] and fellow servant in the Lord:

*** Some guy named TYCHICUS was a deacon. He was mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:12 and Titus 3:12 as a messenger of Paul, and Luke says he was one of Paul's traveling companions in Acts 20:4, so it is apparent that his diakonia service was menial, not preaching, but rather, helping Paul as a messenger and possibly with traveling duties.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (NASB)

2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker (God's "Diakonos," Strong's 1,249, a deacon) in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (KJV)

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God ("Diakonos," Strong's 1,249, a deacon), and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

*** TIMOTHY is named here as a deacon.

Romans 15:30-31 (NSB)

30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, 31 that I [Paul] may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my [Strong's #1,248 "diakonia"] service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

*** PAUL was a deacon, and his "service" was that of teaching, preaching, and evangelism.

Romans 15:8 King James Version (KJV)

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister (Diakonos, Strong's 1,249, a deacon) of the circumcision for the truth of God...

Romans 15:8

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

8 For I say that Christ has become a servant (Diakonos, Strong's 1,249, a deacon) to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,

* JESUS was a deacon. (Well, Jesus held EVERY office: He was prophet, priest, King, etc., so this is no surprise)

* Acts chapter 6 names both Stephen and Phillip as deacons (performing ministry to the Greek widows), and this is not in dispute by any Biblical scholar.

* STEPHEN and PHILIP were deacons. This doesn't seem important, but hold on; it is... HERE'S what I forgot to include in my last email where I was sleep-deprived:

ANALISIS: Almost ALL of the 'deacons' above were teachers and preachers and evangelists, and, in fact, leaders in the church, not mere "waiters of tables."

*** CONCLUSION: So, in conclusion, it seems obvious that deacons can serve in many different ministries, as servant-leaders, who help carry the load of the Bishop (senior pastor), in ministering to the church and spreading the gospel to the world. However (and this is the key conclusion), even if I have missed the mark in my analysis of the diaconate, partly, or even completely, the prophesy or Word from the Lord, I received concerning church growth, stability, and discord will certainly come to pass, even IF we fully correct our course, since such a large correction would be sure to upset some, and sadly be even worse if we did nothing, and let Biblically unqualified people continue to fill these positions. I do not envy your predicament, and, as I mentioned in my last epistle, the only solution I could come up with (were I to be forced to make a decision) would be to switch the 'regular' deacons (the middle-aged & mature 'church' deacons) with the various Connect Group (Sunday School) leader -except in such cases as the Connect Group leader is Biblically-qualified to be a deacon. Since practically anyone can visit the sick & destitute, this would appear to be a workable solution to get qualified leadership in place -- In a church this size, there is NO excuse for having Biblically unqualified persons in leadership --and, hopefully, a school of theology can help shore up our weaknesses; that is sorely needed, but even more necessary is patience & maturity: Pastor Mark -- you and I (and others who are thought to be 'smart') are often asked questions for which we don't know the answers, but we practically NEVER get mad about it -and then go behind peoples' backs & gossip. That maturity deficit is even more problematic than the occasional weaknesses in Bible knowledge: THAT is why I Tim 3 sets such a high standard for church deacons. I will endeavor to remember us all in prayer. -- As an Ambassador for Christ & King Jesus, I write,

Gordon

In a message dated 8/29/2012 8:15:18 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, Gww1210@aol.com<mailto:Gww1210@aol.com> writes:

-----Original Message-----

From: Gww1210@aol.com

Date: Wed, 29 Aug 2012 08:13:56 -0400 (EDT)

Subject: Serious 1 Tim 3 Diakoneo problems with the FBC Diakonos

To: Mark.Bedwell@fbclakeland.org

CC: Gww1210@aol.com, gww1210@gmail.com

Subject: Serious 1 Timothy 3 Diakoneo problems with the FBC @ the Mall's Diakonos

Pastor Mark:

Here is that research you asked me to email you about both qualifications for and role of the diaconate.

To begin with, I would like to thank the Southern Baptist Convention for being probably the 2nd-best denomination in America regarding how it interprets these passages of Scripture: Although many people criticize us for allowing the deacons in our churches to do things like vote in board meetings, and not just pick up the offering & visit the sick, we are more right than them --Biblically, that is. Only the Catholics do better than us, as they interpret the role more-or-less correctly, but as they have some theological issues (problems), I believe the SBC is the best denomination --both in "theoretical" theology as well as in "practical" application of helping the needy to make preaching be "genuine."

That said, even though we're probably the 'best' denomination, we have, corporately, committed an egregious sin before The Lord, in this particular area (the diaconate), one which will cause us untold grief, even if we put a stop to it immediately --and more so if we "ignore" it (it is that bad). And, for the record, I do speak this in the Name of the Lord, that is, claiming that I have heard God tell me this. As a portent of this, I'd like you look at my email to you, dated 10/27/2011 3:45:36 A.M. EDT, I make a surprising prophecy or prediction. Right between my citation of Galatians 6:7 (Be not deceived-sowing & reaping) and my listing of about 7 or 8 surprising miracles, I prophecy, in the name of The Lord, directed to Pastor Terry Delaney:

"Likewise, unless a MIRACLE occurs (which I don't foresee), the Living Today: Singles connect group WILL (read: WILL) have instability, high turnover, interpersonal problems, and difficulty leading the class to spiritual

growth (as well as possibly arguments and strife). It WILL happen – without a direct Divine Miracle intervention.”

(Why I even went out on a limb to make this prediction, I don't know? Either I was crazy, or it really was of The Lord, and it still amazes me; I don't normally do such a thing, since I could have easily put my foot in my mouth & be wrong, and even once would make me a “false prophet.” My prophecy above is quite distinct from when I merely made a “guess” and told you that “I feel” you'd run into distractions, “cares of this life,” demonic opposition, etc. if you tried to utilize the marriage planning book by Dr. Warren to help prevent divorces B4 they occur –bottom of my email to you about that, dated Mon 1/31/2011 4:50 AM, which I also printed out as a commentary to the copy of Dr. Warren's book I gave you.)

When I wrote this, I did not know, exactly, what the problem was –only that there as some sort of problem with the leadership structure –and I had the integrity to speak up then, even if I only saw through the glass darkly.

But, since then, in Pastor Jay's Aug. 12 “State of the Church” address, he reveals that things really are going downhill, as I vaguely sensed when I penned those prophetic words, this past October: Pastor Jay said that church growth is slowing and/or declining backwards. He said that Pastor Steve informed him that we are among the 80% of churches with growth problems. I don't pretend to have known things were that bad this past October, but I have known there was a huge problem, and for some months now, but because I have been “in trouble” for things that, mostly, were not my fault(*), I admit I was afraid to speak up. However, if I don't speak up now, I fear God will strike me down –not sure how or when, but while I admit I usually have a hard time “hearing from the Lord,” this matter is crystal clear, so I will speak up, and thus clear my conscience.

[[(*) Note: While I have been a bit talkative –both in person and via email –when I was a “new member,” and thus not totally without fault, I have toned down of recent, and you know that charges like “I heard you prayed in a prayer group” or “talked about cancer in a cancer group” do not pass the “straight face” test. Since I rarely attended that prayer group, and would not think about being talkative or disruptive, even though I asked for 2 prayer requests, instead of one, I was brief & to the point: In fact, Gordon Sun, one of the Connect Group leaders, was in attendance, and you might ask him; I doubt Gordon, or anyone else for that matter, would even remember me. Like Daniel the prophet, I got in trouble for doing the right thing, and, like Daniel, it was praying. Also, EVERYONE in that cancer group talked about cancer. I went back the following week to the support group –without objection, I might add –and since no one objected at all at the time, and no one could even say how my actions were wrong, all these charges don't pass the 'smell face' test, and thus, I feel, demonic in origin –and it was these many “odd things” that made me search the Scriptures to find out what was going on.

Probably the only reason anyone even KNEW I attended the prayer group when Wingman was in recess this January, was because, after the service, I asked the speaker why you weren't teaching that night. If I had caused ANY sort of disturbance –there or elsewhere –you can rest assured I would have gotten security mobilized post haste! But it never happened: These allegations don't pass the straight face test.]]

OK, in my email to you last October, please know that I didn't merely “make a guess,” but rather, what I wrote, I meant as a prophecy “in the Name of the Lord,” as indicted by how I signed my name:

“As an ambassador for The Christ (2 Cor 5:20)...I am, Sincerely, Gordon Wayne Watts.”

So, in short, here's the tale of the tape:

#1 – I prophesied (“foretelling” of the future) in my email above about strife in a limited sense.

#2 – Pastor Jay prophesied (“forth-telling” of the past –in exhortation) regarding declining growth.

#3 – and here is what I have known now for several months –but have been afraid to say, for fear of the faces of the leaders:

As I said when we spoke Sunday week ago, our church has the HIGHEST standard for “deacons”: I mean, they have to pass a test stricter than the FBI security clearance – man of one wife, NEVER-before divorced,

mature, “8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.” (Excerpt from I Tim 3, NASB, just to set the mood –not meant to be exhaustive)

OK, with that said, the Sunday School teachers and other Connect Group leaders are not even qualified to be deacons... huh.? --> --> Something's wrong with this picture – but what exactly?

Now, 1 of only 2 things is true: Either the various 'Connect Group' leaders ARE deacons (by the Bible definition, that is) –or they are not. (Now, while I have spoken in the Name of the Lord in my claims that we have corporately sinned big-time here, including myself I might add, I oddly enough, do not know which if these 2 possibilities is correct, and I seek your help here –I suspect it is the former, but don't know, so I shall cover both possibilities.)

1st possibility (reverse order of above) – The Connect Group leaders are not 'Biblical' deacons:

If this is true, then they can only be above them –not below: For example James 3:1 (NASB unless otherwise noted) says that: “3 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.” Now, no one can convince me that a person who visits the sick has a stricter standard than someone who teachers impressionable and vulnerable “baby Christians.” So, if possibility 1 is correct, then the Connect Group leaders must be held to a HIGHER (not a lower) standard than the church's deacons, and if that be true, we are in REAL trouble with The Master for being horrible stewards of the blessing! OK, let's look at the other possibility, shall we?

2nd possibility (reverse order of above) – The Connect Group leaders ARE 'Biblical' deacons:

Now, the ramification if this is true are bad, but not quite as bad as possibility 1, above, so, in my opinion, the church had better pray that the latter is the case, and not the former. (And, for the record, I think that this is, Biblically, true.)

There are 2 key points to the diaconate: (#1) role of, and (#2) qualifications for the church deacons.

Now, right off the bat, I acknowledge that #2 above is a VERY controversial subject.

While I am fairly sure that Pastor Steve's interpretation (the strictest one) is probably the “correct” one according to the Bible (that is, man of ONE wife, NEVER before married, NEVER divorced, and this even precludes & prohibits a single bachelor, “man of zero” wives, even if celibate, virgin, & pure, like myself), nonetheless, I admit that we both could be wrong, and will save this “real tough” theological analysis for the end, since it would burn us out at this juncture.

Now, what exactly are the roles of deacons? Well, historically, the church has held that deacons ONLY minister to the hungry and sick in the hospital (chiefly, citing Acts, chapter 6, where Stephen & others were chosen to minister to the Greek widows). That is correct, but is that all? Most people say so, but what does The Word say?

The Greek word, from which we get 'deacon,' is 'Diakoneo,' which is Strong's number 1,247, and which means 'servant' or 'minister,' ok, with me so far?

So, let's see where we find BIBLE deacons (after all, urban legends does NOT trump the Bible, not even on this point) ?

* Acts 20:24 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

24 But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry (Diakonia, Strong's 1,248, which is “Diakonia service” or “ministry,” the same base word as Strong's 1,247 above) which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

* PAUL WAS A DEACON, if you use the Bible definition, looking only at the original Greek, which was the only inspired text.

* 1 Corinthians 3:5 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants (Diakonos, Strong's 1,249, e.g., 'deacons') through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

* APOLLOS and PAUL WERE DEACONS. (According to the Bible, that is. Do we trust the Bible?)

Romans 15:8 King James Version (KJV)

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister (Diakonos, Strong's 1,249, a deacon) of the circumcision for the truth of God...

Romans 15:8

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

8 For I say that Christ has become a servant (Diakonos, Strong's 1,249, a deacon) to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,

* JESUS was a deacon. (Well, Jesus held EVERY office: He was prophet, priest, King, etc., so this is no surprise)

* Acts chapter 6 names both Stephen and Phillip as deacons (performing ministry to the Greek widows), and this is not in dispute by any Biblical scholar.

* STEPHEN and PHILIP were deacons. (This doesn't seem important, but hold on; it is.)

OK, it's past 8am, this Wednesday morning, and I haven't even been to sleep, since I've been doing chores (that include preparation for book promotion of my new book, which you spotted on my Facebook wall post, where Books-a-Million was good enough to list it), and so my list above is surely not complete, but –for the sake of brevity, I'm going to stop here, and apply proper hermeneutic exegesis, as we have sufficient Scriptural underpinning, ok?

If Paul performed “Diakonia service” or “ministry,” then we must ask ourselves, exactly WHAT it was? (THIS is what gives us a clue to “what is a deacon,” and what's he do and “what are his qualifications, etc.)

Briefly, Paul's chief calling was that of preaching. Jesus “did it all, so His “Diakonia service” or “ministry” was quite broad, so, for the time, let's skip Him. Stephen and Phillip performed a lot of “menial” tasks, such as attending to the widows, and such, but Apollos, like Paul and Jesus, had the forte of preaching the gospel, and/or (for Apollos, himself) that of teaching and expounding The Word. (Do you see the pattern here?)

Now, what else can we tell from a “broad view” of the Word, instead of doing like some & picking & choosing?

Basically, there was NO way that just seven (7) men could do ALL the service to ALL the Greek widows in that huge region, so what other truths can we gather from Scripture?

Besides being “broad” in nature (not JUST visiting the sick & feeding hungry widows, but ALSO preaching – and that, even MORE so), we see that the “Bible deacons” (not to be confused with “modern-day 'deacons'”) were not just servants, but rather “servant LEADERS.

So, in summary, there are 2 things we can learn from Scripture about the duties of “BIBLE deacons”:

a) Chiefly LEADERS, and moreover,

b) Their “Diakonia service” could be in ANY area (and usually was NOT in doing what “modern-day” deacons do –although it certainly can include that).

Therefore, in conclusion, it is safe to say that there is a VERY GOOD reason why “Bible deacons” had to meet sometime tantamount to a Secret Service security clearance: Their duties FAR exceeded that of mere ministers to old widows.

Now, this brings us to the qualifications for the diaconate. Many Bible scholars and elders in the Southern Baptist Convention allow pure bachelors to be deacons, and this MAY be correct, in light of the examples of both Saul of Tarsus and Jesus, Himself, who were both single. (Paul may have been married, but I

Corinthians 7:1-7 show him single at this juncture.) An, indeed, the “man of one wife” passage has just as correctly been translated to mean that a deacon must be a “one woman type of man,” which might possibly include a previously-married man, who has remained faithful for many years. (One scholar has even said that Paul could have said that a deacon must be married to the “wife of his youth,” and, since he did not, this scholar feels that a previously divorced man might be a deacon.) But, I personally think Pastor Steve is correct here, to exclude single men, since the Scripture also says that a deacon must rule his children well (and we all know single Christians should NOT have ANY children!).

So, in short, our church has taken our most valuable and most qualified assets (our mature and well-seasoned deacons) and basically shoved them into a corner and said to be quite: Be seen, but not heard. But, when we have used up all our deacons on “menial” service, we then must dip into the less qualified to perform the higher diaconate service, and this is the inversion.

Now, some people in my position would call for those who wronged me to be thrown out of the church –or perhaps thrown out of ministry in any form, and it may BE appropriate, but I'm not vengeful, and this is not even my duty, so I will abstain. But, if I don't speak up about this egregious sin (and even I am guilty –of not speaking up sooner –but I plead ignorance: Luke 12:48, please give me lesser punishment, Lord), then we will be in deep trouble.

While I admit I don't have a clear “word from the Lord” about what, precisely, to do, one solution might entail simply switching the deacons and the Connect group leadership, but whether this is “right” or not, let me put things into perspective.

Let's say you went to a hospital & found that the janitors all had FBI security clearance, and were all PhD's, but then the doctors were just anybody? What if the doctors hired were merely a “friend of a friend” or perhaps, a lawyer? Would you let THEM operate on you? I THINK NOT.

How about this: What if you needed someone to represent you in court? And, say, the Law Firm hired PhD's for their paralegals & janitors –but hired some “rich and powerful” doctor to be a lawyer? Would you let THAT guy represent you? Really? NO! He might know about being a doctor, but he'd be thrown out of court for illegal practice of law –in a heartbeat –in a NY second!

Now, Pastor Steve might (and probably will) raise the objection that the church is NOT a secular hospital, and the church is NOT a law firm –to which I would say: I agree with you. Exactly.! We are MORE, and serve The Lord, with a Higher, not Lower, standard of service.

So, where does the church find justification in Scripture to appoint ANYONE in a position either equal to (or, more likely, greater than) a deacon, who are NOT qualified to be a deacon?

I am not perfect, but it is quite tenable that THIS was the reason I sometimes ran into problems. Pastor Steve is to be commended for trying to salvage my reputation, but if I am a true Christian, his effort is impossible:

Luke 6:26 (KJV)

Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

John 15:20 (KJV)

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

I am not perfect, Pastor Mark, but I am a Christian, and if indeed I am a Christian, I WILL (repeat: “will”) face persecution –and, indeed, in Scripture, most of the persecution was from WITHIN the walls of the church – and that's not surprising: The church is the first place that demonic forces will attack: They have a vendetta – as score to settle –and we are targets.

So, when Pastor Teryl once said that he's “old school” and did not think students should be teachers, I respectfully dissent: I'm REAL 'old school” Solo Scriptura: The Bible ****does**** call us to teach and spread the

Gospel:

Matthew 28:19 (KJV) “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,…” (Jesus did not mean this only to the disciples, since he asked that the whole world be proselytized: Therefore Jesus commands us to teach, notwithstanding, Pastor Teryl's command to the contrary.)

Mark 16:15, cf. Luke 24:47 (KJV) “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Pretty unambiguous, I'd say.)

It's no secret that Pastor Teryl yelled at me the first several times I asked him for help in interpreting Matthew 18:15-17 (which is inappropriate: None of you other guys ever yelled at me for ANY reason), but he is not all bad –and in fact, Pastor Teryl is VERY smart, which leads me up the the last point:

While many different people (some of them FBC pastors, others friends) have independently said that my intellect (not my talkative nature) intimidates people at times, but, you were there when Pastor Teryl gave the most eloquent and candid exporation on that subject I've EVER heard –and thus it bears repeating: You were sitting to my right, and pastor Teryl, right in front of me, when he said (and I'm paraphrasing from memory) “Gordon, we are mature elders, and you don't intimidate us, but many of the church leaders are not so grounded in the word, and you intimidate them. You need to calm down and relax a bit.” – You, yourself, said that when I complained to you about Bill Horn cutting me off and opposing a clear teaching of Pastor Jay, remember? You jokingly said that I ought to go to Mike Workman's group, as I was above the intellect level of the teen group and their leaders. You mean no disrespect to them, and you may have been joking, but you were also dead serious: Bill WAS wrong to oppose my attempts to share a known and vetted teaching of Pastor Jay, to help calm and assure a girl whose doubts about her father's salvation plagued her. In all fairness to Bill, that “teaching” that Pastor Jay and Rev. Don Piper gave was AFTER, not BEFORE my comment, and he did not have the benefit of having heard Pastor Jay preach on that at that point. You recall how ironic (and, IMHO, miraculous) it was for Dr. Dennis to back me on my claims that “near death” experiences do occur, and that her father may have had one, and been given a few extra minutes of being alive –even if the doctors could not detect life. Thirdly, besides your assessment and that of Pastor Teryl, when I was initially kicked out of Living Today: Singles, and no one “had a clue” as to what was the reason, I was clueless. But, when I had to break a dinner appointment with Dr. James Adams, our optometrist friend, and thus disclosed that otherwise private issue of being given the “left foot of fellowship,” I asked him what I may have done to go awry. Dr. Adams said he didn't know, and that, honestly, he had seen me in class for ages and that I'd NEVEF caused a problem. (Remember, Ann Mitchell, another long-time AIM member wrote an email saying the same thing, and I challenged church leader to speak to her and Dr. Adams, remember?) But, when I asked Dr. Adams to take a guess & speculate, guess what he said? (And you can ask him, if you doubt here.) Yes, that's right: He said the same thing as all you (and several others I omit for BREVITY) – namely that he thought my questions in class were TOO HARD (not too long –not offensive –not obscene or vulgar or insulting or demeaning) –no, just “too hard,” that's all. But, can you imagine one of YOUR kids getting in trouble for asking a college professor “too hard” questions? Really? They'd FIRE that prof on the spot!

Pastor Steve might raise the point that church is not a college, to which I'd say “yes, I agree”: We're held to a higher (not lower) standard. So, if that be so, then, just as we can't put just ANYONE in as a history, art, or physics professor, likewise, we can't put just ****anyone**** in as a “leader” (in any capacity, not just Connect groups), simply because Billy Bob Vern or Bubba is a “friend of a friend” –or simply because they're a “rich and powerful” doctor, lawyer, or local business man: As Acts 10:34; I Samuel 16:7; and, James 2:1 require, we can't look at these people and always defer to them, without carefully checking the facts: If a college wouldn't just let ****these**** guys waltz in there & teach, how much less should we? We're held the a HIGHER standard, but often-times, “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” (Luke 16:8, KJV)

This should not be so!

So, in conclusion, I speak in the Name of the Lord, with this one single prophecy: Even though our church has the SECOND BEST interpretation & application of a “Bible” deacon, nonetheless, we FAR “miss the mark,” and if we don't right our course, our church WILL fulfill ALL the prophecies aforementioned with regard

to strife, membership, numerical AND spiritual growth, arguments, and increased work –both qualitatively and quantitatively –for your security detail, as people become restless. (I am NOT seeking any specific retaliation against those in particular who wronged me –that would be petty –and quite incomplete: The problem is global, not local, in nature.) Just remember: The Titanic was “the” best, not just 2nd-best, and even it had room for improvement –and we, mere mortals –all have areas of weakness, and must seek The Lord. I don't have all the answers, but this is the best I can do. I will be praying for you all.

--> --> Off-topic, but before I forget: When I was giving Pastor Steve a copy of Dr. Warren's book on PREVENTION of marriage troubles (the only marriage book that I've found that deals with PREVENTION, instead of cure), I had to finish my soft drink, and I was late going into the 8am Sunday morning service. Well, I could not hear the lobby monitors of Pastor Jay preaching, and so, while I currently don't have a hearing impediment, nonetheless, I went up and checked out some hearing-impaired headphones, and they could not pick up ANYTHING except right there at the desk –well, I told the staff, and they said that it was a new system, and they had not worked out the bugs. However, when I got home, I did some research on that, and since I'm the valedictorian of United Electronics Institute (a 2-year vocational trade school) in addition to having a “regular” double major, it was not too hard to trouble-shoot this, but as FBC hires Billy Bob Bubba (or perhaps a “rich and powerful” person -respector of persons' bias) for leadership (and not people with expertise or training in this area), things like this will keep happening. <-- <--

As an ambassador for The Christ (2 Cor 5:20), Savior (Jn 3:16), Creator (Gen 1, Jn 1, Col 1, Heb 1), our advocate (Job 16:19; I John 2:1), and the only perfect role model & example (John 13:15; I Peter 2:21),

and:

With kind regards, I am, Sincerely,

Gordon Wayne Watts, editor-in-chief, The Register
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Get Truth

"First, they [Nazis] came for the Jews. I was silent. I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists. I was silent. I was not a Communist. Then they came for the trade unionists. I was silent. I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for me. There was no one left to speak for me."(Martin Niemöller, given credit for a quotation in The Harper Religious and Inspirational Quotation Companion, ed. Margaret Pepper(New York: Harper &Row, 1989), 429 -as cited on page 44, note 17,of Religious Cleansing in the American Republic, by Keith A. Fornier, Copyright 1993, by Liberty, Life, and Family Publications.

Some versions have Mr. Niemöller saying: "Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant"; other versions have him saying that they came for Socialists, Industrialists, schools, the press, and/or the Church; however, it's certain he DID say SOMETHING like this. Actually, they may not have come for the Jews first, as it's more likely they came for the prisoners, mentally handicapped, & other so-called "inferiors" first -as historians tell us-so they could get "practiced up"; however, they did come for them -due to the silence of their neighbors -and due in part to their own silence. So: "Speak up now or forever hold your peace!"-GWW

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