

## Are the 7 men chosen in Acts 6 Deacons??

Acts 6:1-6

The context from the ESV:

1 ¶ Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men **of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom**, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose **Stephen**, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and **Philip**, and **Prochorus**, and **Nicanor**, and **Timon**, and **Parmenas**, and **Nicolaus**, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

To be selected for this task the men must be "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom." Would these qualifications imply the men would be honorable? Yes. Would they well liked? Sure. Would they be men of kindness, love, dependability? By all means!! Would they be deacons? No! This does not make them bad people, less to be honored, or in any way thought less of than deacons! They simply did not have the requirements of deacons mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

**All deacons must be servants, but all servants are not deacons!** If these men in Acts 6 do not have to be husbands of one wife to be deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13), then Lydia, Priscilla, Nympha, Euodia, Syntyche, could **also** be *called* deacons not needing to be husbands, because they too were servants! We could just as easily *call* Paul an elder because of his spiritual leadership in the church. **All elders must be spiritual leaders, but not all spiritual leaders are elders!** Since *elder* means older, all elders must be older. Should it be acceptable to *call* all Christian older people elders in a church context? Or would this be confusing, maybe misleading or even deceptive to the English-speaking Christian? How is this different than *calling* all who serve the church, deacons? All Sunday school teachers are serving the church, could we therefore call all Sunday school teachers Deacons? The old adage "call Bible things by Bible names" might be appropriate here.

The English word deacon(s) is used **only five** times in the versions I checked (ASV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, ESV, NIV). All these translations use *deacon* or *deacons* in the same five verses, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8, 10, 12 and 13. The only exception is the NIV who translates διακονησαντες (from v.13) as "Those who have served well" instead of "those who serve well as deacons" [ESV]. It is obvious from the context, especially verse 12, that the subject is deacons so either translation is correct. All the Greek scholars for these translations from the KJV in 1611 through the ESV in 2011 consistently used the English word *deacon*, **only** to represent those who meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3. What scriptural, logical or linguistic evidence can be presented to justify changing that long standing rule and now say or imply that anyone who serves the church in any way can be referred to as a deacon?

Almost every word in the Greek (and English) language has more than one meaning. The correct meaning for any given word is determined by the context in which it is used. What word or group of words in our context of Acts 6 implies that these men could be called deacons?

One of the most basic rules of logic is: "The burden of proof always lies with the affirmative." For those who think it is acceptable to call the chosen men in Acts 6 deacons, they must prove from scriptures or logic that their decision is correct. If you are aware of any such evidence I encourage you to share it with us.

Any comments or suggestions are greatly appreciated. ....Cliff