

Covenant Membership — Week 3

The Covenant Relationship Between Deacons and the Church

Primary Text: Acts 6:1–7

Opening Prayer

A prayer asking the Lord to focus our minds on His Word, to instruct and equip us for His glory and our good.

Purpose of This Study

This is the third and final week in our study on **covenant membership**, answering two key questions:

- **What is covenant membership?**
- **Why does it matter?**

This teaching prepares us for **Covenant Renewal Sunday in January**, helping ensure that our renewal is not merely routine, but a meaningful act of worship rooted in understanding.

Review of Previous Weeks

Week 1: Covenant Membership vs. Traditional Membership

- We are **members of one another**, not merely attendees.
- Our fellowship is rooted in **koinonia** — deep, covenantal participation with God and with each other.
- Covenant membership reflects how **God deals with His people** — not casually, but through binding, faithful promises.

Week 2: The Covenant Relationship Between Elders and the Church

- Elders are called to **spiritual oversight**, guarding the flock.

- Their role is likened to **watchmen on city walls** — vigilant, prepared, and diligent.
- The church is called to work *with* elders, not against them, so leadership may be a joy.
- There is a **mutual partnership** between elders and congregation for spiritual growth and refreshment (cf. Romans 1:11–12).

Week 3 Focus: Deacons and the Church

Central Doctrine: Covenant Theology

A **biblical covenant** is a solemn, binding relationship initiated by God, calling for faith and obedience from His people.

- All church covenants (elder, deacon, membership) flow from the **New Covenant established by Christ**.
- God oversees and sanctifies how His people relate to one another within the church.

Biblical Foundations for Deacon Ministry

The Meaning of “Blessed” (Matthew 5)

The Beatitudes teach that *blessedness* (Greek: **makarios**) is:

- Living under the **approving favor of God**
- A joy rooted in **relationship**, not circumstances

This helps us understand:

- Suffering and blessing are not opposites
- Joy flows from belonging to Christ, not from ease or prosperity

The Early Church (Acts 2:42–47)

The church was devoted to:

- Apostles’ teaching

- Fellowship
- Prayer
- Meeting one another's needs

As a result, **God added to their number daily** — not through strategy, but through faithfulness.

Acts 6:1–7 — The Problem and God's Provision

The Issue

- The church grew rapidly and included both **Hebrew and Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) believers**
- Widows among the Hellenists were being neglected in daily food distribution
- This threatened the **unity of the church**

The Apostles' Response

- They affirmed the importance of meeting physical needs
- They recognized their primary calling: **prayer and the ministry of the Word**
- They called the church to select men:
 - Of good reputation
 - Full of the Spirit
 - Full of wisdom

God's Design

- The congregation selected the men
- The apostles appointed them through prayer and the laying on of hands
- Unity was protected, and the Word continued to spread

This moment serves as the **origin and model** for deacon ministry.

Deacons in God's Redemptive Plan

- Old Testament parallel: **Levites assisting the priests**
- New Covenant distinction: deacons are not limited by tribe or ethnicity
- This reflects God's plan to unite Jew and Gentile in one body

Covenant Responsibilities of Deacons

Deacons covenant to:

1. **Guard the Unity of the Church**
 - Address practical issues before they become spiritual divisions
 - Serve in ways that preserve peace and harmony
2. **Support the Ministry of the Word**
 - Work alongside elders so they can remain devoted to prayer and teaching
 - Help communicate and implement church direction
3. **Serve Practical Needs**
 - Oversee care for widows, shut-ins, and facilities
 - Lead the church in acts of service (not do everything alone)
4. **Model Godliness**
 - Meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8–13)
 - Lead by example in character and conduct
5. **Carry Out Tasks on Behalf of the Church**
 - Serve faithfully under the spiritual direction of the elders

The Church's Covenant with Elders and Deacons

The congregation covenants to:

- **Pray** for church leadership
- **Follow their spiritual leadership**
- **Support their work** through encouragement and service
- **Speak the truth in love**, not gossip
- **Hold leaders accountable** to Scripture — not personal preference
- **Receive their ministry** as God's provision

Deacon Covenant (Summary)

Deacons commit to:

- Serve under elder leadership
- Meet the physical needs of the body
- Protect unity
- Lead in humble service
- Walk blamelessly before God
- Step down if qualifications are no longer met, seeking restoration

Membership Covenant (Summary)

Members commit to:

- Submit to biblical leadership
- Pray and support elders and deacons
- Hold leaders accountable to Scripture
- Protect unity
- Honor leaders as servants of Christ

Closing Encouragement

Covenant membership is not about roles or hierarchy — it is about **faithful partnership** in the body of Christ.

There is no such thing as an unimportant church member.
God has designed the church so that **we need one another**.