

Devotions in Your Diaconate

Devotions happen at least a dozen times a year. Deacons gather for their monthly meeting and someone begins the meeting with devotions. This is a special time for the group. It provides the deacons with a chance to “inhale” – to catch their breath and focus on God. This brief outline suggests some practical ways to do that.

GETTING STARTED...

Deacons are busy people. Many have an active family life and demanding, tiring occupations. When deacons come to a meeting they bring that busyness with them. For some, it may be the first time that day to sit without interruption!

It helps to take fifteen to twenty minutes at the beginning of a meeting for devotions. It provides a time for deacons to be encouraged by our God. It contributes to a calmer and more focused atmosphere for the meeting.

The following steps may be helpful.

1) A TIME OF SHARING

At the very beginning of the meeting, it is helpful to have a sharing time amongst the deacons. Ask each person to briefly share about the following:

- *Is there something in your life for which you are particularly thankful right now?*
- *Is there something in your life that is currently a challenge for you?*

You can share together in one group. If there are more than five people, some people may hesitate to speak up. It also takes longer to share with the whole group. In this case you could divide into two or three groups.

2) A TIME OF PRAYER

Prayer at the beginning of a diaconal meeting is a special time. It provides a time to:

- ask God’s leading on the work;
- express thanksgiving to God; and
- lift each other up in prayer.

During the meeting specific situations, needs or people will be mentioned and they can be lifted up in prayer later. Here are some ways to share prayer together at the beginning of a meeting.

a) **One Person Leads in Prayer**

The person who opens with devotions leads in prayer. It is helpful if this person makes some notes during the time of sharing. It is a challenge for some individuals to pray for items about which they have just become aware. Extra encouragement for this person may be required.

b) **Pray for Person on Left (or Right)**

Each deacon listens carefully during the time of sharing to what the person (on their right or left) says. When it is their turn to pray, they name the items of thanksgiving and those matters that present a challenge. This approach helps deacons to practice praying on behalf of another person. One individual could close in prayer with the following:

- thanksgiving to God for the opportunities He gives for ministry;

- God’s leading and direction during the meeting and after the meeting.

In a larger diaconate, this time of sharing and prayer could happen in small groups of three or four people. It is usually helpful to rotate members into different groups at each meeting.

c) Lift Our Sharing and Meeting to the Lord

It is not necessary to repeat all that was heard during a time of sharing. Just ask one person to pray at the close of a time of sharing. A prayer like the following may be offered:

“Lord you have heard things for which we are thankful. You have heard the issues that challenge and stretch us. We lift them up to you now. We ask you to accept our thanks, bless and strengthen us and direct us in our plans and decisions through this meeting.” Then close the prayer.

3) HEARING GOD’S WORD

It is important for a deacon’s meeting to begin with an encouraging Word from God. He is the source of all the direction we need. Options to hear God’s Word may be:

a) Through a Relevant Bible Passage

Select a Bible passage that relates to diaconal ministry. Share how these verses speak to you. Invite others to share as well. Many scripture passages provide a powerful inspiration to a deacon for their calling and ministry. Some “favorites” are:

Psalm 121; Isaiah 58; Zech. 7:9-10; Matt. 19:16-30; Matt. 25:31-46; I Cor. 8, 9; 2 Cor. 1:1-6; James 2:14-17; I Tim. 3: 8-13; I John 3:16-18

b) Through a Diaconal Resource

Read a devotional/article or interact with a Partners mini-workshop that applies to the current ministry of your deacons. Share together what may be helpful in the application.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER: OBLIGATION and PRIVILEGE

Deacons encounter many different kinds of needs in their ministry. Intercession is a way of loving others. God invites us to intercede for the well-being of others before Him. These prayers may happen during or at the end of the meeting.

Persons and ministries for whom we need to labor by intercessory prayer may arise during a deacon’s meeting:

- through mail. As correspondence is shared, there may be prayer requests.
- through verbal reports. As deacons report on visits, they will identify people and situations that need prayer.
- through the sharing of current challenges within/ outside the church.
- There is the ongoing need to pray for the needs in our own community.
- Ministries in your community (especially Operation Manna projects) need prayer.
- As they walk with the poor in the world, DMC and CRWRC covet prayer.

Intercessory prayer may take place in a variety of ways.

- Ask one person to record requests and mention in a closing prayer.
- Ask one person to write requests on a 3x5 card or post-it note. Give one request to each deacon for the closing prayer.
- Pray for the situation or person as it comes up.