



Devotions in Your Diaconate

Devotions happen at least a dozen times a year. The deacons are gathered 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... ON THE RIGHT FOOT

Deacons are busy people with a busy family life and an active and growing career. When deacons come to a meeting they bring that busyness with them. They sit down and exhale. For some, it is the first time they have had a chance to sit all day!

It helps to take 15-20 minutes at the beginning of a meeting for devotions. It provides a time for deacons to “check in” with each other and be encouraged. It can help to set a more relaxed tone for the meeting.

A TIME OF SHARING

It is helpful to build a sharing time into the beginning of the meeting. The process is simple. Just ask people to share for 1-2 minutes each about the following:

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

You can stay together in one group but if there are more than five people, some people will hesitate to speak in a larger group. Also it takes longer to share with the whole group. Then you can divide into smaller groups.

A TIME OF PRAYER

Prayer is a special time for a diaconate. It provides a time for:

- Asking God’s leading on your work;
- Expressing thanksgiving to God;
- Lifting each other up in prayer;
- Interceding on behalf of a person.

At the beginning of a meeting it is especially good to focus on the first three. During the meeting specific situations, needs or people will be mentioned and they can be lifted up in prayer later. Here are some suggested ways of having prayer together.

ONE PERSON LEADS IN PRAYER

The person doing devotions leads in prayer. It is quite common for a person praying like this to have some notes of what they want to pray about. However, this usually puts pressure on that person. It’s another reason why many deacons will not lead in devotions in a meeting.

PRAY FOR THE PERSON ON YOUR LEFT (OR RIGHT)

Each deacon listens carefully during the time of sharing to what that person says. When it is their turn to pray, they simply name items for thanksgiving and those items that present a challenge. Each person is also asked to include in their prayer, one of the following:

- Expressing thanksgiving to God;
- Asking God’s leading on your work.

This approach also helps deacons to practice praying on behalf of another person.

In a larger deaconate, you can do this time of sharing and prayer in groups of 3 to 4. It is usually good to rotate the groups at each meeting.

LIFT OUR SHARING UP TO THE LORD

It is not always necessary to repeat all of what we have just heard during a time of sharing. The Lord heard all of it. Just ask one person to pray at the end of the time of sharing. That person can introduce the prayer and then pause and say: *“Lord you have heard things for which we are thankful. You have heard the things that challenge and stretch us. We lift them up to you now. We ask you to accept our thanks, bless and strengthen us and refresh us on our way.”* And then close the prayer.

A Time of Prayer for Others

Deacons encounter a lot of people as they work in their ministry. Each needs to be lifted up in prayer. Prayer is our way of saying that these needs are God-sized. We need to lift them up to God. Often these prayers of intercession may happen during or at the end of the meeting.

A deacon’s meeting is a natural place to identify these. Here are some ways they will come up.

- In the mail: as you review correspondence, there may be prayer requests of the deacons.
- In reports: as deacons report on their visits, they will identify people and situations that need to be named in prayer.
- There may be ongoing illness of someone in your church community.

- There is the ongoing need to pray for the poor in our own community.
- The projects and ministries in your community (especially Operation Manna projects) that your diaconate supports.
- Pray for the CRWRC staff as they walk with the poor in the world.

There are a variety of ways to lift these in prayer. Here are a few:

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

Learning from the Bible

It is important for a deacon’s meeting to begin with an encouraging word from God. He is the source of any direction we need. Here is what you could do.

READ YOUR FAVORITE PASSAGE

Pick a passage that speaks to you about the work of a deacon. Share how this passage speak to you and invite others to share as well.

There are many scripture passages that provide powerful inspiration to a deacon for their calling and ministry. Here are some “favorites”.

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

READ A DEVOTIONAL AND/OR ARTICLE

Read an article that applies to our work as deacons. At the end, share what spoke to you in this article. Ask other deacons to share what strikes them.