

DDM

DEACON MAGAZINE® Fall 2017

SERVANT
LEADERS
IN THE
CHURCH

Deacons as Models of Generosity

Page 19

7 STEPS to Help Reduce Church CONFLICT

Page 25

Deacons' Wives Rallying Around Hurting People

Page 37

Protecting Your Church from PREDATORS

Page 40



WWW.LIFEWAY.COM FALL 2017 \$4.00



6 34337 28198 8



Features

- 12 Three Paths for Deacon Training**
Options to Consider to Help Your Deacons Grow
by CRAIG WEBB
- 16 Fully Committed**
How a Deacon Can Fully Support the Life of the Church
by RICK EZELL
- 19 Deacons as Models of Generosity**
Giving and Encouraging Others Toward Stewardship
by RON BLUE
- 22 How Deacons Can Help Others Deal with Death**
3 Practical Ways to Offer Comfort to the Grieving
by J.D. DAVIS
- 25 The Ministry of Deacons in Conflict Resolution**
7 Steps to Help Reduce Church Conflict
by RUSSELL COOK
- 28 Deacons & Worship**
4 Easy Steps to Making Worship Meaningless
by MATT TULLOS
- 34 Welcoming and Ministering to Hurting People**
5 Practical Ways Deacons Can Create a Christlike Culture
by DAVID HOWARD
- 37 Deacons' Wives Rallying Around Hurting People**
8 Fresh Ideas to Help You Show the Love of Jesus
by DIANA DAVIS
- 40 Protecting Your Church from Predators**
How to Build Strong Fences and Take the Right Stand
by DON PUCK
- 43 Remember the Poor**
4 Steps to Help Your Church Move Beyond Benevolence
by MARK KELLY

In Every Issue

- 3 From One Leader to Another
by MARK DANCE
- 6 From the Heart of a Pastor
by DEAN SISK
- 8 Being God's Man
by KRIS DOLBERRY
- 10 My Favorite Deacon
by JOE MCKEEVER
- 11 Soundbites
- 30 Leadership
by ERIC GEIGER
- 32 Plan of Salvation
- 42 Soundbites
- 46 Deacons Meetings
(September-November)
by RON BROWN
- 49 Toolbox by BEN REED
- 50 AND ANOTHER THING ...



On the Cover





PROTECTING YOUR CHURCH FROM PREDATORS

How to Build Strong Fences and Take the Right Stand

by DON PUCIK

FOLLOWING MONTHS of false rumors and verbal attacks, the deacons and their pastor had arranged to meet with the man whose actions and words were deeply dividing their church. The ensuing discussion was frustrating to everyone involved. After several attempts to uncover and address the man's core complaints, the pastor finally asked, "What would it take for us to satisfy your concerns and to put an end to this conflict?" Moving within inches of the pastors' face, the man harshly replied, "I won't be satisfied until you're gone!"

Bullies, antagonists, and predators aggressively pursue their own self interests in the church, influencing others through various forms of misinformation, manipulation, or intimidation. Left unchecked, an active predator will entangle members and pastors in a never ending series of conflicts, leaving behind a trail of wounded souls and a damaged church.

Predators represent an ancient threat to the body of Christ. Speaking to church leaders in the first century, the apostle Paul warned, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Men will rise up even from your own number and distort the truth to lure the disciples into following them. Therefore be on the alert" (Acts 20:29-31). How can deacons stay "on the alert," protecting the church from predators?

Build Strong Fences

MAKE IT TOUGH FOR POTENTIAL PREDATORS to establish a base of operation within the church. Just as strong fences can hinder or prevent wolves from gaining access to a defenseless herd or flock, wise preventive measures discourage church predators. The more effort you devote now toward constructing "fences" in your church, the less energy you will spend warding off predators in the future. What are those "fences"?

1. Loving Relationships. When deacons allow the Holy Spirit to produce Christ's love in them, they will prioritize relationships whenever conflicts threaten the fellowship.

(See Gal. 5:22-23.) Although predators thrive in “loveless” churches, they find it difficult to work with people who have learned that loving one other through a disagreement is more important than winning a debate.

2. Local Mission. Predators maneuver easily in self-absorbed congregations. (See Jas. 4:1-2.) But what is the local, God-given mission of your church? In Jeremiah 29:7, the prophet told God’s people in exile to “pursue the well-being of the city ... for when it thrives, you will thrive.” Deacons who encourage church members to selflessly “exit the building” in order to bless the people in their local community are helping to build a strong fence against predators.

3. Individual Ministry. God has given your church all the people it needs to accomplish its mission. (See 1 Cor. 12:18.) Pastors are called to equip the members to fulfill their call to ministry. (See Eph. 4:12.) Consequently, deacons should be encouraging every member to become a minister! Predators are drawn to churches where pastors and a handful of members do most of the work. Hungry for control and power, predators will seek out important positions for themselves or challenge anyone who gets in their way!

4. Spiritual Maturity. The heart of the Great Commission is to make disciples. A disciple is more than a church attendee. A disciple is someone who is being transformed into the likeness of Jesus by following Him in a daily, intimate relationship. (See Col. 1:28; Gal. 4:19.) Spiritual maturity is seeking to please the Lord in every area of life, especially in relationships with others. In a church where deacons are encouraging people to love and follow Jesus, predators struggle to mask their selfish motives and immature behaviors.

5. Guiding Documents. If your church has a set of bylaws and policies, observe them carefully, being sure they adequately and accurately reflect the way your church conducts its business. Predators love to use obsolete or ignored documents to create confusion and to get their way during a church conflict. Updated documents will clarify how decisions are made and who has the right to make them.

6. Leadership Training. Although most pastors spend years in formal ministry studies, deacons often receive little or no preparation for their work. Contact your pastor, associational missionary, or one of your state convention employees for information concerning training opportunities designed to equip you to handle conflict in the church. Consider starting a study group with other deacons, reading Scriptures and discussing books to help you grow as spiritual leaders. When a predator begins to disrupt the church, you will be prepared to respond with biblical truth and practical wisdom.

Stand Against the Predators

WHAT IF THE “FENCES” ARE INADEQUATE to stop the advance of a predator? You need a good guard dog! Used

for centuries in Europe and Asia to protect sheep and goats from wolves and bears, livestock protection dogs are now being bred for use in the United States. Similarly, the church needs spiritually mature men who will place themselves in the path of a predator. When a predator attacks the church, how can deacons stand with their pastor and guard the flock of God?

1. Pray together. Remember that all battles belong to the Lord. (See 1 Sam. 17:47.) While the predator might consider you an enemy, you know the real battle is not with flesh and blood. (See Eph. 6:12.) Set aside time as leaders to seek the Lord together, trusting Him with your need for wisdom and guidance. (See 1 Pet. 5:6-7.)

2. Gather facts. Predators can control some church leaders through intimidation. But if that fails, they will spread gossip and slander to influence the church’s perception of their leaders. Predators will filter and misrepresent their information in order to provoke negative emotions within church members. To establish the truth, deacons need to concentrate on gathering facts before taking decisive action. (See Prov. 25:2.)

3. Challenge the sinful behavior. When Paul encountered a deeply troubled and argumentative soul, he suspected the behavior might be due to demonic influence. Consequently, Paul encouraged Timothy to keep “instructing his opponents with gentleness” in the hope that they might repent of their words and actions. (See 2 Tim. 2:24-26.) Because predators will interpret gentleness and patience as weakness in a leader, pastors and deacons need to work together to communicate their unity and resolve.

4. Initiate church discipline. When should a deacon body pursue church discipline of a predator who continues to cause turmoil and division? Paul taught church leaders to issue two formal warnings to an individual creating division in a church. If the predator refused to repent and change, Paul directed church leaders to end the discussion and the relationship. (See Titus 3:10-11; Rom. 16:17-18.) If your church has adopted a process for church discipline, observe it carefully.

Dealing with church predators is extremely draining. Deacons might fear losing the respect of their family and friends by getting involved in the conflict. However, they are more likely to win their respect by standing against those seeking to undermine the ministry of the church. Paul promised that deacons who serve well will “acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:13). Serve well! ☺

.....
For further reading: *Equipping Deacons to Confront Conflict* by Robert Sheffield and James E. White (LifeWay Christian Resources, 1986)

Don Pucik serves as pastor of the people who make up Wynne Baptist Church in Wynne, Arkansas. Parents of six and grandparents to one, Don and his wife, Gail, have been married for 35 years.