



Grace Life Church

of Dallas

The doctrines of grace, the life of the Spirit, to the glory of God

ALMS/MERCY GIVING

The diaconate is a group of men (deacons) appointed and presented by the elders and operating under the oversight of the elders that expresses in practical ways Christ's command to all believers to love our neighbor as ourselves. Deacons must strive to ensure practical needs are met at the corporate level, and to ensure temporal needs of individuals and families are met.

The diaconate is a ministry of mercy that reaches out to people in and around our local congregation who are in crisis or in challenging circumstances and offers help in assessing their needs and working together to find Biblical solutions. Unlike elders, who are responsible for teaching, prayer, and overseeing the church, the diaconate focuses on extending mercy and compassion. One of the purposes of the diaconate is to show God's love and mercy in a Gospel-centered way by coming along side of those in difficult circumstances and to be facilitators of the work God is doing in their lives.

Here are some of the principles that guide our alms/mercy giving to those in need:

- Believing family members should be looked to first to meet the need, before the church (1 Timothy 5:4, 16).
- The church has the responsibility to care for the “needs” (food, shelter, clothing) of the Body, and the diaconate is the primary means God has given toward that end. Since this is a responsibility, it is not optional, but commanded. The responsibility is regarding the “needs” of the Body, not the wants or the comforts. Also, if possible we are to meet the entire need, which generally will include more than just financial help. (Matthew 25:34-40, Luke 3:10-11, Acts 2:45, James 2:14-17, 1 John 3:17)
- The diaconate, as stewards for God, must manage His provisions carefully and with wisdom. The diaconate will thoroughly assess each situation (including the circumstances that caused and contributed to the need), commit it to prayer, and give as the Lord leads and provides.
- The diaconate will encourage those in need to seek to see if the individual or family in need can meet the need themselves, whether that is through current income, savings or sale of unneeded assets (1 Timothy 5:8). If the recipient is unwilling to try to provide for themselves, they cannot continue to receive assistance (2 Thessalonians 3:10)
- The diaconate should not allow their giving to sustain or enable unbiblical (or foolish) decisions (1 Timothy 5:6).
- In the case where a choice must be made, the diaconate should meet the needs of those within the congregation before meeting the needs of those outside the congregation (Matthew 25:34-40, Luke 3:10-11, Acts 2:45, James 2:14-17, 1 John 3:17).