

SESSION 1:

THE OFFICE OF DEACON

TEACHER REVIEW - SESSION 1

PREPARING FOR SESSION 1

In this session, ...

If you are teaching this session, you will need to be prepared to:

- Welcome everyone to the Deacon Development Cohort
- Introduce the overarching goals of the cohort
- Lead prayer and book discussion
- Articulate a biblical ecclesiology and how the diaconate fits as a vital piece
- Teach about the origins and calling of deacons from the book of Acts
- Lead an exercise reflecting on the calling of deacons in light of the metaphors for the Church.
- Give an exhortative teaching on facing fear and resistance in leadership and calling
- Facilitate an integration exercise on fears and resistance
- Communicate expectations around homework and participation in the Deacon Development Cohort

BIG IDEAS

- A Biblical Vision of What the Church is and Why it Matters
- The Biblical Metaphors for the Church
- The Origins of the Office of Deacon
- A Positive Vision for the Calling of a Deacon
- Understanding the Fears and Resistances Experienced in Leadership
- How to Face Fears and Resistance

SESSION TIMELINE: 2 HR 25 MIN TOTAL

Welcome and Prayer (15 min)

Dinner with Table Discussion (30 min)

Teaching: The Church and the Diaconate (50 min)

Break (5 min)

Teaching: Facing Fears and Resistance (15 min)

Integration, Discussion, and Prayer (20 min)

Final Instructions and Benediction (10 min)

SESSION 1: THE OFFICE OF DEACON (2 HR 25 MIN)

WELCOME AND PRAYER (10 MIN)

Welcome to the Deacon Development Cohort. Our goal for this training is threefold: 1) we hope to equip you in leadership and ministry skills, **regardless of what the future holds**, 2) we want to give you a robust vision of who deacons are and what they do in the church, and 3) we want to help you explore whether this is a role you are called by God into.

Cohort details to cover:

- In the Fall, we will have three total gatherings at Frontline Downtown with all congregations. Same time and place. Dinner will be provided at each one.
- In the Spring, there will be three gatherings at your local congregation with just your congregation's cohort and team.
- In between each gathering, we will assign a small amount of reading. Physical copies for the Fall are available at the table.

Pray through Ephesians 3:14-21. This should be framed as a prayer of blessing for the participants of the cohort and an embodiment of the vision and heart that you just framed up.

DINNER WITH TABLE DISCUSSION (30 MIN)

As you eat dinner, take time at your tables to discuss the following questions. [*These questions will be printed out on the table.*]

1. If you could immediately become an expert in one topic, what would it be and why?
2. What have you been sensing God saying to you as you step into this process? Have you had any words or pictures related to the cohort?
3. What were your biggest takeaways from reading *Deacons* by Smethurst? In light of his description of deacons, how are you hoping God will develop you during this cohort?

TEACHING (50 MIN)

Ecclesiology (20 Min)

There is so much confusion around deacons in the church. Where do even we start? Almost every church tradition and denomination views the office of deacon differently. In some churches, deacons are much more like elders who govern and lead the church. In other churches, deacons are church board officers who make the business decisions. Another view is that deacons are simply anyone who is a really great volunteer. In extreme cases, some churches have abandoned using deacons altogether, seeing them as unimportant and unnecessary. In light of such confusion, it would be tempting to dive right in and start unpacking what specific Scripture texts say about deacons. But that's actually starting in the wrong place.

Imagine your doctor scheduled you for a knee replacement surgery, while all the time the root cause for your pain was actually that you have high arches and simply need more foot support. Your doctor didn't understand how everything fit together; he just attacked the problem. The human body is intricately and wonderfully interconnected. Every system in your body fits together and works in tandem. Oftentimes, treating pain or disease in one part of the body is so much more complicated than just isolating the one part that hurts. This is because of how interconnected God designed us to be.

In the same way, before we dive into explore all the passages around deacons, we need to pull back and see the church's scope and how deacons fit into the whole. Deacons don't just exist for themselves. Deacons are church-people. They love the church, serve the church, and lead the church. Their very existence is founded on the breathtaking vision of the Church found in Scripture. This is why Paul, after talking about the qualifications for elders and deacons, writes:

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. (1 Tim 3:14-15)

We ought to know how deacons fit into "the household of God." God has placed tremendous value on his Church. She is a pillar and buttress of truth. Therefore, how she is built and how she functions matters a great deal. Without a proper understanding of the church, you will never really get the main point: deacons exist *for* the church.

One reason we have failed to understand the role of deacon is because we have failed to rightly see the Church in all her glory. We consider deacons primarily as the people who put out fires, rather than as housekeepers in the Temple of God. We focus on the deacon's vital work of hospital visits and care calls, while neglecting the deacon's vital work of spiritual motherhood and fatherhood in God's Family. Deacons may pour all their energy into leading ministries without remembering that they're bridesmaids and groomsmen for Jesus' Bride. In order to have biblical deacons, we need to have a biblical ecclesiology.

The term "ecclesiology" refers to the study of the Church. It looks at how we understand the nature and mission of the Church. However, many of us put the cart before the horse when it comes to our ecclesiology. We often begin by looking at what the Church does, instead of who she *is*. We focus on our pet-ministries, our own love or dislike for church leaders, or the ways that the local church has failed us, and we think that these things define the Church. But we must go back to Scripture and reflect on who God says she is.

1. *The Church Is the People of God, Both Catholic and Local*

Who exactly is the Church? And why do we sometimes capitalize the word, while other times we don't? When we talk about the Church, we are speaking about two separate but connected realities: the local church and the catholic (or universal) Church. Notice both of these in Paul's greeting to the Corinthians:

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. (1 Cor 1:2)

First, there is “the church of God that is in Corinth.” In this sense, the church is a local gathering of believers committed to one another under qualified leadership. It is marked by regular gatherings, preaching, Sacraments, recognized membership, discipleship, and church discipline. There are a number of local churches in places all throughout the world, each with their own culture, theological distinctions, and vision.

But in this same passage in 1 Corinthians, the Church refers to “all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, the Church is one entity describing all Christians everywhere. All people who trust in Jesus, whether near or far, whether in heaven or on earth, whether past or present, are members of the one Church. In this sense, the Church transcends locality and time. No matter our culture or denomination, the Church is united by the Holy Spirit in our allegiance to Christ. This is what Paul means when he says:

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4-6)

In one sense, there are many churches (local). But in another sense, there is only one Church (catholic). In fact, these two ideas of church are not divorced from one another, but they are inherently connected. The one holy catholic Church finds its expression in individual local churches. The local church aims to maintain the unity of the Spirit that we share in the one holy catholic Church. To be a part of the local church, you must be a part of the catholic Church. And to be a part of the catholic Church means you are pursuing community in a local church.

In the local church, deacons are called to spiritual leadership as a unique vocation. These leaders have a special commitment to their local church body, to see it grow in health and vitality. This local ministry is not disconnected from the broader church. While deacons are focused on a specific local church, they likewise serve for the good of the catholic Church. As the local church grows in love and devotion to Jesus, it reveals and expresses the beauty of the one holy Church.

2. The Church Was Designed To Display the Wisdom of God

The Church, both catholic and local, is crucial to God’s vision for the world. The Church is the way he is making his wisdom known to all creation, in heaven and on earth. Hear how the New Testament puts it:

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Eph 3:8-10)

While we may view the Church as a mess, Christ sees the Church as the pinnacle of his wisdom, grace, and love. The “plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God” was his plan to rescue and redeem a *people* to himself through his Son Jesus. It is that people who manifest the wisdom and victory of God. The Church is a sermon God is preaching about his mercy and power. The 4th century theologian, Athanasius, said that Christians are raised up daily as “monuments to His victory.” The Church is like the rock of Ebenezer, the stone that the Israelites raised up to declare the Lord’s mighty victory over their foes.

God uses the Church to accomplish his mission in the world—to bring his kingdom from heaven to earth. God created the Church to be his representatives on earth. As we are shaped by the Spirit, we bring healing and life and light and hope into the world. We cannot separate what God is doing in the world from what he is doing through his Church. The light of Jesus shines in the darkness through the people of God. If we want the glory and wisdom of God to be displayed to the universe, we should recognize the high calling God has placed on the Church.

Deacons serve in the church to this end—that the glory and wisdom of God would be displayed to the universe through faithful service and leadership. We should recognize the high calling God has placed on the Church, and as a result, on deacons. The Church is not a place to gain recognition, wealth, or fame. It is not a place to grow our platform. But it is a glorious people growing in grace and showing forth God’s wisdom. The call of a deacon is to lay down their life to see the church become more faithful to Christ.

3. *Biblical Metaphors Shape the Church’s Identity and Action*

When the Bible describes the Church, it often does so through the use of metaphors. Metaphors help us bring definition to the indescribable, and they shape the “feel” and “heart” of an idea. Imagine trying to explain the essence of marriage to someone who has never heard about it. They would certainly need to know about the basics of daily partnership. However, it would be a fragmented picture if we were to leave out the profound mystery of the two becoming one flesh in covenantal union. We need the *why* to give context to the *what*.

The same is true for the Church. To understand the beauty and importance of the Church, the Bible uses certain metaphors to give substance and depth to our understanding of the Church. Metaphors help us to turn data into meaning. They take abstract ideas and make them concrete and relatable. They make the raw facts sing.

When we look at Scripture, four primary metaphors are used to identify the Church: Temple (1 Cor 3:16-17), Bride (Eph 5:22-33), Body (1 Cor 12:12-24), and Family (Eph 2:14-20). Each metaphor is explicitly linked to the grace and new identity we have received in Jesus. In the metaphors for the Church, God holds up the mirror of mercy and introduces us to ourselves.

God's metaphors name the identity of the Church and invite her to live from that deep well of being. These metaphors help us see the reality of the Church, despite her imperfections and frailties, and at the same time, they pull us forward into what we are becoming in Christ. Metaphors inherently have power to shape our lives because identity informs action. The New Testament, from beginning to end, bangs this drum.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

Our new identity in Jesus is to be lived, practiced, and worked out in real life. Our lives are to be formed over time to reflect Jesus in word and deed. If identity forms action, and metaphor forms identity, then metaphor must form action. The God-gifted identity of the Church has the power to transform our life.

But taking a step further, these metaphors likewise shine light on the one who calls us and names us. We cannot rightly understand the metaphors of the Church without recognizing what they tell us about God. It is elegant that, as God introduces us to our new identity and purpose, he simultaneously introduces us to himself. This dual revelation is by design. This is the truth that lies at the heart of these metaphors. Wrestling with the identity and action of the Church is also an invitation to see God more clearly.

Exercise (15 Min)

Printed at your table, you will have one of four biblical metaphors for the church listed with a key scripture.

1. The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-24)
2. The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33)
3. The Family of God (Ephesians 2:14-20)
4. The Temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

For the next 10 minutes, take time at your tables to read this key Scripture (and any others that come to mind as relevant for that metaphor). Then, consider the following questions:

- What does this metaphor tell us about God?
- What does this metaphor tell us about our identity and action as the church?
- What artifacts would a deacon embody if they fully embraced this metaphor?

After the tables are done, take an additional 5 minutes for 1 or 2 tables to share what they learned and how they answered the questions.

Deacons (15 Min)

So how do deacons fit in to God's vision for the church? What exactly are deacons and how did they come about? In the book of Acts, we read about the early days of the Church. In Acts 1, the Church consisted only of about 120 believers hiding in an upstairs room in Jerusalem.

But after Pentecost, another 3,000 believers were added in one day. Then at the end of Acts 2, we read:

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

In the chapters that follow, thousands of men and women continue to place their faith in Jesus. By the time we get to Acts 6, the Church grew from 120 frightened followers to a movement of well over 10,000. The rapid pace of growth created real tensions and problems in the church.

The Apostles were established leaders who took responsibility for building, teaching, and grounding the Church. At this time, they were doing everything, and it was messy. Oftentimes, they were required to go beyond their core duties and address more practical needs, which pulled time and energy away from their primary role. At this point in Acts, they were heavily involved in the finances of the church, taking up offerings and distributing the money to those in need. Just a couple chapters earlier, it sets the stage:

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:34-35)

They got the job done for the most part, but they were not primarily gifted or called for such things. They were called to preach and pray and lead, not manage church finances. As a result, when we get to Acts 6, people have begun to slip through the cracks.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. (Acts 6:1)

In the first century, the church set aside money to provide for widows in their care. There was no social security or retirement system at the time. Widows who needed care would receive daily food and money. In return, many of these widows would devote themselves to serving and ministering in the church. These widows based their livelihood on the fact that the church would provide for them. But in Acts 6, we see that some widows were being neglected, and it was on purpose. They looked and sounded more Greek than Jewish, and people didn't like that. So these widows complained to the Apostles and begged them to step in and do something.

Today, many pastors would solve the problem by extending their oversight. They would step in, remove the problem, and get the job done. They would spend hours and hours to set up systems, committees, or ministries to fix the squeaky wheel. They might even tell the complainers to take care of the problem themselves. But amazingly, the Apostles didn't do this! They didn't decide to get their hands deeper in the finances and extend their oversight. They didn't ask for the books or start an investigation. Instead, they decided by the Spirit to establish a new role, a new office, to support the practical needs of the church. They appointed deacons.

It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:2-4)

The Apostles dedicated themselves to preaching and prayer, but the church needed formally established, recognized leaders whose primary role would be to lead in practical ways. In time, these leaders became known as deacons. Whereas elders would lead the church by governance, prayer, and teaching, deacons would lead the church through care, service, and mission.

Where deacons are not established, elders will often get distracted and shift their focus away from their main calling. Or they might delegate the task to people who are unqualified, unrecognized, and unaccountable. For this reason, deacons are crucial for the maturity and mission of a local church. They serve in various practical ways throughout the church to free up the elders to do what God has called them to do. And as a result, as we see in Acts 6, the church will flourish. Immediately after the installation of the first deacons, we read this:

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

So how exactly should we understand the office of deacon?

1. Deacons Serve the Church

We've already seen that deacons specialized in practical ministry. They served in all sorts of ways which freed up the elders to focus on shepherding the church. This is the exact reason they ended up being called deacons. The word "Deacon" comes from the Greek word "*diakonos*," which simply means "servant." Most of the time in the New Testament, this word "*diakonos*" is not referring to the office of deacon, but is a generic term for servants inside and outside of the church.

However, this new office of the church was so characterized by the idea of service that they took on the name "deacon." Referencing the Apostles' calling to preach rather than "serve tables," the original word for deacon was connected to the idea of a waiter.

The original frame of reference for the use of the entire word group of the diak- stem in secular Greek was that of table service. The basic meaning of the verb, correspondingly, was wait on tables. (Alfons Weiser, Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament)

Indeed, in Acts 6, deacons were tasked with "serving tables" by overseeing the daily distribution of food to the widows. But their service expanded beyond this in a number of ways. In the early church, deacons oversaw the collection and disbursement of church funds, cared for the needy and poor, oversaw catechesis of new believers, and visited Christians who had been thrown in prison. They took on whatever administrative and practical duties were needed—tasks which would have bogged down the elders from the ministry of word and prayer.

2. Deacons Lead the Church

While every deacon should be a good servant in the church, not every good servant in the church should be a deacon. There is something else required before someone can take up the mantle of deacon. Deacons must not only be good servants, but they must also be good leaders. For instance, in Acts 6, deacons were already well-known leaders within the church before being chosen for this role. They were already “men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.” These deacons weren’t simply the volunteers, the people who enjoy grunt work, nor the ones who would merely do the task at hand. They were leaders of the church set apart for their work of service.

Here is what’s fascinating. Have you ever noticed how many deacons were raised up to meet the vast amount of needs in Acts 6? Seven. There were well over 10,000 people in the church at that point, but only seven men were appointed to serve as deacons and solve this massive discrimination problem. How is that even possible? How could seven men even begin to make a dent in the vast array of needs within the church? There is only one possibility. These servant-leaders weren’t doing everything themselves. They weren’t running every single meal to the widows. Instead, they were delegating and ensuring that all the needs were met. The office of deacon requires a level of vision, administration, and team-building. Looking carefully at Acts 6, it becomes clear that the role these leaders stepped into wasn’t just a “doing” role. It was a delegating, discipling, and mobilizing role.

3. Deacons Represent the Church

In the New Testament, the role of deacon is elevated to an office of the church. As such, deacons functionally represent the church to the world. This is a grand calling with weighty responsibility. As representatives of the church, deacons play a vital role in the formal, public, and institutional life of the church. As with the office of elder, deacons are held accountable for their life and ministry. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul requires that deacons meet specific character qualifications that demonstrate a mature and exemplary life. Before they are installed as a deacon, they must be tested by the church and prove themselves blameless.

Look back at Acts 6, in the moment of their installation, the apostles laid hands on the deacons. In the Bible, laying hands on a person is not just a nice way to pray for them. It is a formal sign that responsibility is being passed onto someone else, just like when Moses laid his hands on Joshua to lead Israel in his place, as his successor (Deut. 34:9). Deacons are appointed to represent the Church in their service and leadership.

Immediately after the first deacons were established, we see these men leading the way in mission and even martyrdom—both of which point to how they were viewed as representatives of this new Christian faith. At the end of Acts 6, we see Stephen performing miracles and teaching in the synagogue—disputing with the Jews and defending the Christian faith. Stephen spoke with such Spirit-filled wisdom that they could not dispute his arguments. So they had him arrested and brought before the high priest.

Before the most influential Jewish leaders of the day, Stephen preached a powerful sermon, applying the Old Testament narrative directly to his hearers. He courageously brought the truth of Jesus into light and confronted the unbelieving Jews for their stubbornness. Despite its focus on Peter and Paul, Stephen preached the longest recorded sermon in the book of Acts.

Stephen the deacon becomes the first Christian to be killed for his faith. In this, Stephen was the first Christian to follow the footsteps of Christ all the way into death. In other words, even the enemies of Christ recognized deacons as representatives of the Church.

BREAK (5-10 MIN)

DEACON STORIES (10 MIN)

As the room is gathered again, bring up a current deacon chosen from any congregation to interview about their story of becoming a deacon. This deacon should be selected by considering the teaching topic to follow. Is there a Frontline deacon who could share a story of fear, resistance, or challenge in stepping into God's calling?

TABLE EXERCISES (35 MIN)

Fears and Resistance Set Up (5 Min)

When God calls men and women into leadership, they often experience a variety of resistances (either internal or external) and many fears. When Moses was called, he worried that he was not skilled enough for the job. Saul was afraid to lead and he hid himself from the Israelites. Jeremiah considered himself too young to be a prophet. Paul had to encourage Timothy and Titus not to give into worry concerning their youth. We can think of several other reasons to be afraid, such as the fear of failure, fear of commitment, or fear of conflict. There is something about the responsibility and the visibility of leadership that causes fears to bubble up in us.

On top of those fears, a host of different resistances might arise in you when you consider a calling to the diaconate—"I won't have enough margin to lead," "I don't see myself as a deacon," or "I'm not sure I have the right skills the church needs." These resistances may not be tied to a particular fear, but may be the result of preconceived notions that you hold about leadership. These sorts of fears and resistances can keep us from embracing the calling that God has put on our lives. Our fears often seem big and near, and God seems small or far away. We want to increasingly become people who can trust God's voice above the voice of fear, submit resistance to God, confide in trusted Christians, and count the cost of taking godly risks. The Bible reminds us again and again of God's heart toward his people in our fears.

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:5-7)

The office of Deacon is a vital role for the health of Christ's Church. By serving the church, they lead to the overall fruitfulness of the body. And for those called to be a Deacon, Paul leaves us with these words.

For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim 3:13)

Serving as a deacon in the church is a high and honorable calling. While every leadership role has cost, and no leader fulfills their role perfectly, Paul makes it clear that this role should be held in high esteem. It's not the case that being installed in an office, as an elder or deacon, makes you closer to God just because you have a title. But, we do believe that it is often through the callings that God has placed on us that he sanctifies us, pursues, and works for our good. The way that God brings us further into communion with himself is through the merciful plans that he has made for our lives. In 2 Corinthians 4:1, Paul tells us the reason for his own calling.

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 Co 4:1.

In Jesus, the main reason that any person has a calling placed on their life is because of God's mercy. The diaconate is an honorable calling that God uses to instill confidence and sanctification to those who are called. And for all of us, pursuing God's calling—even with all of the fears and resistance—puts us in the path of his mercy and goodness.

Naming Your Fears and Resistances Exercise (30 Min)

Now we are going to take a few moments to reflect on the fears or resistances that are stirring in your own hearts. When you think about the possibility of becoming a deacon at the end of this process, what fear or resistance stirs in your heart. *Teacher: Give a few examples. Such as...*

- *Fear of man: "I am scared of what others will think or say about me."*
- *Fear of failure: "I am scared I won't be enough. I am scared I will mess up."*
- *Fear of warfare: "I am afraid of experiencing spiritual attack when I pursue leadership."*
- *Resistance to Calling: "I'm not sure I am called to be a deacon."*
- *Resistance from margin: "I don't think I will have time."*
- *Resistance from competency: "I don't think that I am _____ enough to be a deacon."*

Take the next five minutes to reflect. Ask God to make clear to you what happening in your own heart. Pick just one to highlight for this exercise.

Teacher Note: After five minutes are up, tables will work through their fears and resistances together. Be sure that you have assigned a table leader to each table ahead of time. Table leaders should be current elders or deacons who are skilled at asking good questions and moving conversations one step deeper. The table leader should begin to lead their table to dig deeper into the roots of their fears or resistances. A list of potential questions to ask will be provided below, but leaders should be able to hold the moment with enough presence to know when to press deeper and when to improvise. **Simply reading the questions in order is not sufficient.** You

should not expect every person at the table to share equally. Table leaders should protect 10 minutes or so at the end of this time to practice listening prayer for one person who shared at their table. Give instructions for listening prayer.

Sample Questions for Leaders

1. What fear or resistance did you name? If you had to, could you describe it in one sentence?
2. Where do you think that fear comes from? Do you have a memory that comes to mind? Is there a narrative that you tell yourself about that fear?
3. Are any idols revealed in you as you think about your resistance or fear?
4. Where do you see that fear or resistance affecting other areas of your life?
5. What do you think Jesus would say to you about this fear or resistance?
6. How does scripture speak to your fear or resistance? How does the gospel address it?
7. What do you need from your brothers and sisters around you?
8. Imagine what your life would look like if you fully surrendered to that fear or resistance. Where would you go? What would you do or not do?
9. What do you think a version of [Name] would look like without this fear? Describe him or her. How do you think that version of yourself would offer encouragement to you now?

SENDING (5-10 MIN)

Teacher Note: At this point, gather everyone's attention together for a concluding moment. This time should include thanking participants for coming and taking the cohort seriously. You will remind everyone about the date and time for the next gathering and the homework required before it. Close by praying for the group and reading a benediction over the room.

Homework

- Robert Thune, *Gospel Training for Deacons*
 - Read Introduction and Lessons 1-3
 - All exercises are optional
- *A Church for the City: The Mission and Distinctives of Frontline Church*
 - Read Introduction and chapters 1-3

Benediction

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb 13:20-21)