EQUIPPING
DEACONS
in Caring Skills

VOLUME 1

Homer D. Carter
Equipping Deacons in Caring Skills

Volume 1

Homer D. Carter

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Teaching Suggestions

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Editor

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### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Power for Ministry</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Basic Caring Skills</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Caring for the Hospitalized and Their Families</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Caring for the Bereaved</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Caring for Those Experiencing Spiritual Doubt and Guilt.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Caring for the Lonely</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Caring for the Needy</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Caring for Church Members in Conflict.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Caring for Those Experiencing Major Life Events</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Caring for the Uprooted</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Caring for Husbands and Wives in Conflict.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Caring for Parents and Children in Conflict</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Caring for the Alcoholic and the Addict.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Caring for the Depressed and Despairing.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources for Ministry</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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I have been blessed in that most of what a pastor does is enjoyable for me. I like the variety. Rest has often come merely by shifting the focus from the office or study to the homes of people. The pastor's life can be exciting. Nevertheless, most pastors will agree that we face the challenge to accomplish more than one human being can possibly achieve. We readily agree with the Acts 6 picture, a setting in which the apostles (preachers) were confronted with increasing needs of a young congregation. Seven men were chosen to share the responsibility. They were asked to minister to the people, to hush the murmurs (manage the conflict), and to help the apostles have more time for Bible study and prayer. Today's busy pastor knows that he must exercise his leading, proclaiming, and caring roles. He knows in his heart that the gifts of every member are needed if the congregation is to be spiritually healthy. He must find ways to share responsibility for ministry to the people he loves and serves. The question is how best can this be done?

The Priesthood of All Believers

Ordination day was not an altogether happy time for me. I clearly remember the comments from one of those present: “The office of pastor is the highest calling a person can ever have.” That statement disturbed me. It became a symbol of my discomfort with some of the tones that surfaced on that now distant day. Some careful teachers had filled me with excitement as they shared our Baptist heritage, the priesthood of all believers. I came away from the ordination service with a sense of “dis-ease.” Strangely, I was uncomfortable with some of the ordination experience. Why was I so uncomfortable on the heralded day of my ordination? Surely, a portion was bound up in my own seeking to understand myself in my new role as pastor. I had barely agreed to become responsible for myself; and then, suddenly, I heard that I was responsible for others.

The burden of adulthood, the agreement to become the giver and provider, has always been enough to make us shudder. This was
Martin Luther's problem in the spring of 1507 when he became a priest. He was so awed by the mystery of it all, along with the weight of his own need to better understand what was happening, that Erikson reports he fell over crying, “It's not me; it's not me.”

On a day when one is supposed to celebrate, he was overwhelmed with the weight of an awesome responsibility. I can identify with Martin Luther.

There was more to my discomfort, however, than my need to better understand what was happening. I was troubled to be ordained with implication that I would now be separated from lay people.

The priesthood of all believers, this basic belief to which all of us give lip service—what does it mean? Most of us have known from the beginning that it states a truth about the accessibility of God to each individual believer. There is no pecking order through which our requests must be made. Surely, there is more, however, to the priesthood of every believer than accessibility. There is also a responsibility to care for each other. The doctrine is rooted in Scripture. As far back as Exodus 19 the idea is stated: “And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6, RSV). That has always been the biblical goal—not an elite tribe that serves as priests but a kingdom of priests!

Numbers 18:1-5 does establish a special tribe through Aaron and his kinsmen, the Levites. This development in the Old Testament has never been the goal. It was merely a transitional arrangement.

The end has always been a kingdom of priests. Hebrews 7–9 pinpoints the special high priesthood role of Jesus Christ. The rest of us are called as priests who derive our authority from him. This truth is majestically expressed by Peter: “And like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. … But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:5,9, RSV). This is addressed to every believer in Jesus Christ. To be saved is to be a priest. To be a Christian is to be a minister.

The young church knew the truth of these Scriptures and practiced them. There was no artificial distinction between clergy and laity. The early church was fresh with the breath of the Spirit, a vital force. Every Christian was a responsible minister before God. He who had received was expected to give.

By the beginning of the second century, the clergy had begun to be distinguished from the laity. The ideal had always been a ministry for all of God's people and a recognition that all God's people have been gifted for ministry. The gifts for all God's people had been identified in key passages, such as Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. All these Scriptures agree that every Christian is gifted and that the Christian is responsible to employ his gift or gifts. “As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace” (1 Pet. 4:10, RSV). However, the trend to neglect the gifts of the laity continued, almost in an unbroken train until the Reformation.

John Wycliffe, John Huss, and Peter Waldo made some gains. They made a beginning for the recovery of the “kingdom of priests.” Martin Luther further recovered the lost pearl. It was Luther who instructed new congregations to call out those from their midst who would be supported by the congregations as they declared “the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).” This emergency measure of the Reformation experiences was indeed a return to the New Testament pattern. The Anabaptists reinforced this development with their emphasis that all who receive believer's baptism have equal authority and responsibility before God.

Recovery of the priesthood of all believers
in the Reformation did not guarantee a continuing understanding. To understand does not guarantee that a pastor will invite his people to share ministry with him. In my earlier years I tended to do it all. This meant that I worked hard to sharpen skills of speaking, officiating, administering, winning, enlisting—whatever it took to make the church go. There was always the subtle pressure to excel in those skills more than anyone else in the congregation. Then I would have been threatened by the idea of training others to minister to the body.

The Pastor’s Role as an Equipper

The New English Bible appeared in 1961. It provided this accurate and forceful translation of Ephesians 4:12: “These were his gifts: some to be ... pastors and teachers, to equip God’s people for work in his service.” The importance of verse 12 was obscured by the King James Version which placed a comma after “the perfecting of the saints.” The New English Bible and subsequent translations correctly omitted that comma. This had the effect of linking the equipping ministry of pastors with the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Before long, I began to hear the phrase, “equipping ministry.” This phrase opened my eyes to both a generalized and particular ministry.

The writings of Elton Trueblood introduced me to a fresh expression of this time-honored idea. He wrote in 1967, “The idea of the pastor as the equipper is one which is full of promise, bringing back self-respect to men in the ministry when they are sorely discouraged by the conventional pattern... To watch for underdeveloped powers, to draw them out, to bring potency to actuality in human lives—this is a self-validating task. A man who knows that he is performing such a function is not bothered by problems of popular acceptance because he is working at something which he can respect ... Though his life is not easy, he is saved from triviality, for he knows that his work is both necessary and important.”

The writings of Trueblood, Samuel Shoemaker, and Keith Miller crystallized this truth for me. I realized by the late sixties that my special role as pastor was to be a pastor-equipper.

The ministry is for all who are called to share in Christ’s life, but the pastorate is for those who possess the particular gift of being able to help other persons be encouraged and prepared to practice the ministry to which they are called.

This clearer understanding of my role as pastor began to jell enough by the early seventies that I had become a believer in a shared ministry with an understanding that God had called me to an “equipping ministry.”

Some pastor-equippers have grown accustomed to calling themselves “coach,” a term universally accepted in this country by all ages. The coach discovers, develops, and trains the players under his care. He lives in community with them.

The most able coaches are those who demonstrate and model the very skill being taught. A “player coach” is more than a Monday morning quarterback who second-guesses those who play the game. He knows much of what to anticipate. He has been there.

The pastor-coach will be the one who is more concerned in developing others than he is in adding to his own prestige as a player. The mark of his success is not the amount of attention which he can focus on himself. He knows he is most successful when those under his guidance learn how to give good care. This pastor-coach analogy requires a game plan, one that faces up to the needs of the game.
The Deacon’s Role as a Minister

I began to sense several years ago that such a game plan was offered through the Deacon Family Ministry Plan that our church adopted in 1972. Although I was fascinated by the potential of the plan, little did I realize how slowly but surely this strategy would serve to change the shape of our congregation.

Our own congregation had been conditioned by the board of deacons concept for most of its more than one-hundred-year history. Basically, this meant that the deacons functioned as the decision-making group to oversee the total life of the congregation. I can remember when a recommendation apart from the deacons’ approval had little chance of survival in a business session. Although there were numerous committees in the congregation, the deacons still tended to do or rework the tasks of the properties committee, the stewardship committee, and the personnel committee, among others. The pastor tended to be the “father” of this system. The deacons, especially the executive group, were the “favorite sons.”

The Deacon Family Ministry Plan moved us away from this traditional pattern to more of a shared ministry. The pastor began to be the “pastor–equipper,” and the deacons became “brothers” who more and more shared in the responsible care of ministry to the congregation. At the same time, less and less committee work was done by the deacons as various church committees then carried out the commission given to them by the congregation.

This shift toward deacons as ministers is consistent with the work of the seven in Acts 6–8. Their ministry included caring for the needs of the widows, healing a possible break in the fellowship, and proclaiming the gospel (Stephen and Philip). This is reinforced by the understanding of passages such as Ephesians 4:12 and 1 Peter 2:5,9.

More and more deacons have placed a priority on ministry. Getting into the care of persons has demanded that all other concerns be placed into categories of lesser importance. One of the primary requirements for the office of deacon has become that of a commitment to the care of persons. In summary, our deacons have moved from an administrative board to a ministering corps. Ministry to others has become primary. All else has become secondary.

Simple to implement, the Deacon Family Ministry Plan calls for the organization of the church membership into proportionate groups so that each deacon is assigned and accepts responsibility for those families and persons in his group. Groups may be put together on the basis of geography or special needs that a particular deacon can best meet. The deacon becomes a minister to his group. In our church a church secretary calls the appropriate deacon every time the pastor is notified of a crisis. There are times when the deacon is the first to minister to a member in crisis.

The Equipping Approach

My own role has become that of pastor–equipper. I have committed myself for several years now to giving the deacons my best energy to enable and equip them for this ministry of family care. They look to me for leadership in this direction. I have accepted and am learning to celebrate this role of player–coach.

Once the deacons themselves place a priority on ministry, training will follow as naturally as night follows day. The attentive pastor offers to go with the deacon on ministry calls where help is needed or companionship sought. Or he may arrange for the experienced deacon to go with the less experienced. The pastor–equipper can make no better use of his time than in this kind of one-to-one training and encouragement.

There are, however, limitations to how far
a pastor can spread himself. Obviously, much training of deacons can best be accomplished for the sake of efficiency and interaction within the group of deacons. The purpose of this book is to provide practical resources to use in the group training of deacons. This book is to help you become aware of the vast array of resources available to train deacons.

In our own congregation there is seldom a deacons' meeting that does not include a generous portion of time reserved for the reporting of ministry contacts. The deacons are held accountable by a reporting system. The emphasis is on what has been done, not what has been neglected. With rare exceptions our deacons include a training session on each month's agenda. This period usually follows the time when deacons report on and discuss ministry contacts of the previous month; as a result, the reporting provides strong motivation for learning through the training session. Those responsible for planning deacons' meetings can make certain that equipping becomes an indispensable part of each meeting.

Some years ago our deacons asked me to offer training in caring skills for the deacons and others in the church during the Sunday evening Church Training hour. A format was followed for some twenty weeks. I took actual interviews of other ministers with members of their congregation and used these written accounts as a way of teaching our deacons some ministering skills that they wanted to learn. I offered them helps in areas such as hospital visitation and spiritual doubt. They chose the help that best fitted the needs of the deacons. Interest ran high. This experience became a turning point in my own excitement for the equipping of deacons. I began to see how enjoyable training can become. Not only did the deacons learn how to minister, but they also matured spiritually as they faced up to their own struggles. Can did introductions to the everyday pilgrimage and hurts of others have given them a more realistic view of congregational life.

Not all deacons will insist on training as ours did. The pastor might draw up a selection of training needs such as those addressed in this book and ask the deacons to indicate which ones are worthy of some training attention. I predict that they will indicate a willingness to become involved in a training effort.

Teaching suggestions are included for each of the sessions. The pastor can use the material in these sessions for more than a year's training if one session is used each month. If more time is allowed, he can easily make this equipping manual the training resource for a two-year period with the deacons.

Several sessions could well be the agenda for an in-depth, overnight retreat where pastor and deacons draw aside for a training conference. Their spouses might be included.

Any of the sessions could be used as the basis of a pastor-led training time. Some might wish to use selected sessions as a training resource when particular needs arise within the congregation. Training sessions can be repeated for new deacons and can also reinforce earlier training for others.

Additional resources for each session are listed at the back of the book. For extended study, supplementary material, or a particular need in any of these areas, these resources will prove helpful.

The Pastor's Resources

Ministry can be exhausting. To give without getting for oneself can push one toward spiritual bankruptcy. Looking back over the course of my own pastoral ministry, I can see that through caring and giving I expected that somehow I would someday be released from my own lonely condition as a minister. For years I preached on the loneliness of others, documenting as I went the fragmentation, aloofness, and alienation of
contemporary man. But somehow it seemed a matter of weakness to have this problem for my own. This made it difficult for me to identify, let alone face up to the problem of my own loneliness.

“We keep hoping that one day we will really understand our experiences—the woman who will bring peace to our restless life, the job where we can fulfill our potentials, the book which will explain everything, and the place where we can feel at home. Such false hope leads us to make exhausting demands and prepares us for bitterness and dangerous hostility when we start discovering that nobody, and nothing, can live up to our absolutistic expectations.”

I had ministered for years with what I can now see were unrealistic expectations of congregations I served. This false hope had prepared me for some disappointments. There were some dangerous barriers between me and the congregation that had not met those impossible demands. This had become at points a hindrance to some relationships.

I had become aware of my loneliness, my alienation, my separation at a particular point. I heard myself sharing with my wife: “I’ve been praying a prayer that surprises me. I am asking for a prayer meeting in our fellowship, a gathering initiated by one of our men and guided by one of them as a spiritual leader. I have never been invited to such a prayer meeting in all of my ministry. I crave this kind of fellowship and realize that one does not exist inside our congregation. I don’t plan to mention this to anyone else. I could organize it myself, but I need to have it happen beyond my own doing.”

Within three months I had been invited to a Monday night prayer meeting begun by a small group of men, guided by one of them. I immediately accepted and found a fellowship where I could talk about my loneliness and inadequacies, my own fears, my own disappointments in myself and in others. As I “confessed” and became open with my broth-
community through which the Spirit instructs and empowers. This community is marked by the capacity of pastor and deacons to acknowledge their own wounds as they expect and receive power to become “wounded healers.” The climate can be such that each can talk about his own feelings of inadequacy and fear. We learned to cover our weaknesses and show only our strength. The pastor/deacon prayer community can discover that in our weaknesses God chooses to reveal his strength (1 Cor. 1:25). We are never any stronger than when we are able to confess our own weaknesses.

It is in the midst of a praying community that pastor and deacons seek and expect guidance from the Holy Spirit so that needed gifts can be identified and employed.

6. Ibid.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

The teaching of this book will be enhanced if the following guidelines are followed:

• Select a time when most of the deacons can be there. Consider inviting potential deacons and other interested church members.
• Select a room that is comfortable, well lighted, and conducive to learning. A room large enough for participants to be seated around tables would be a good selection.
• Make sure any visual aids (chalkboard, newsprint, poster board, or others) are in place before participants arrive.
• Provide paper and pencils. This will encourage participants to take notes.
• Be thoroughly familiar with the content for each session.
• Plan wise use of the teaching time. The training plans have been written for a one–hour session (except chapter 2 which may require two hours).
• Do any advance planning before time for the session. Any instructions for advance planning in the training plans will be marked with an asterisk (*).
• Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you teach.
The deacon’s ministry is a shared ministry. Deacons are called to partnership in ministry under the leadership of the pastor. Our cherished doctrine of the priesthood of all believers means more than the access of every believer to the Father; it also means each Christian is responsible to care for and minister to one another. Deacons can lead the way in this ministry and model care for the entire congregation.

Deacons need to be equipped for such a caring ministry. This means deacons need to develop basic caring skills and learn to apply them in specific ministry situations. Sessions 2 through 14 provide resources for such training. However, these skills must not be a substitute for the spiritual power essential for God-given ministry.

Power for ministry comes directly from God’s presence in your life. But God also gives power through other persons.

**Power Through God’s Presence**

The deacon’s personal relationship to God through Christ is the foundation for all caring ministry.

Moses could not accept the awesome challenge God had set before him until he heard God’s promise to be with him. When Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” God responded, “I will be with you” (Ex. 3:11-12, RSV). Moses found power for ministry through the assurance of God’s presence.

Jesus knew that the commission he gave his disciples was only possible with the promise, “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20, RSV).

When the Jerusalem church needed to set apart seven of their number to minister to some special needs and to heal the fellowship, they knew such men needed the fullness of the presence of the Spirit of God (Acts 6:3).

Regular personal prayer is essential to building a personal relationship with Christ. Also Bible reading and study, both personal and in the church through Sunday School classes, Church Training sessions, and sermons help the deacon see life and other persons from God’s perspective.
**Provides Adequacy for Ministry**
The deacon can be open about his feelings of inadequacy and fear as he enters the personal ground of another person’s need. Although learning skills to increase effectiveness in ministry are essential and valuable, this sense of inadequacy can be healthy as it drives the deacon to a dependence on God. God wants our availability, not just our ability. The Lord told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9, RSV). The deacon’s freedom to admit his limitations and inadequacies becomes an opportunity for God to empower.

Jesus made a staggering promise concerning the resources of power a Christian can expect through the presence of God’s Spirit. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the work that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father” (John 14:12, RSV). The deacon who is ready to minister needs to claim and experience the power of God’s presence.

**Provides Motivation to Care for the Needs of Others**
Loving others enough to care for their needs arises out of a loving relationship with God. Jesus linked the two relationships when he declared: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-39, RSV). The good Samaritan was Jesus’ example of being neighbor to a person by acting to meet his need (Luke 10:33-37). On the eve of his crucifixion Jesus knelt to wash the disciples’ feet. He powerfully demonstrated his commitment to a servant ministry to others. He explained: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15, RSV). His caring has become a model for our caring.

This same pattern for caring action is stated with unforgettable forcefulness in Matthew 25:31-46. Those who gain favor in the day of judgment are those who have met the needs of others. The provision of water to the thirsty, visitation of the imprisoned, care for the sick—“As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40, RSV).

**Provides Sensitivity to the Needs of Others**
A key to Jesus’ caring ministry is his sensitivity to the needs of others. This is illustrated in his sensitivity to the individual needs of persons such as the woman who touched his cloak and was healed (Matt. 9:20-22); Zacchaeus, who had climbed a tree in order to see Jesus (Luke 19:1-10); and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-26). This sensitivity is a hallmark of Jesus’ ministry style.

Sensitivity can be mystically inspired, such as an inexplicable impression to go to someone, only to learn upon arrival of a specific need. But sensitivity also comes as a gift from God through wise perceptivity. Experience makes it possible to know a person in the hospital, a bereaved family, or a family in conflict needs care. Experience helps a deacon become aware of the signals of loneliness, doubt, guilt, or depression.

**Provides Guidance in Using Caring Skills**
There are some ways in which training for deacon ministry can be compared to combat training for the military. The purpose of good training is to simulate conditions that the trainee can anticipate under fire. He will develop sensitivity and reflexes which will carry him through when he needs them most. The deacon can expect more than the conditioned reflexes that come from good training. He can expect God not only to
provide guidance in learning the skills needed
to minister more effectively but also to pro-
vide the guidance in remembering these skills
and putting them to practical and appropriate
use in specific ministry situations.

For example, when Moses let God’s pres-
ence empower him, his abilities and training
were enhanced. He wasn’t as totally inade-
quate for his mission as he thought. When
Jesus sent out the twelve, he said: “When
they deliver you up, do not be anxious how
you are to speak or what you are to say; for
what you are to say will be given to you in
that hour; for it is not you who speak, but
the Spirit of your Father speaking through
you” (Matt. 10:19-20, RSV).

The Power of a
Human Support System

The deacon does not minister in a vacuum. He
is a part of the human support system
that includes his own family, the fellowship
of his local congregation, and the organiza-
tions within his own church. That support
system provides resources both for the dea-
con’s personal growth and for help in minis-
tering to others.

The Deacon’s Family Provides Support
The deacon’s first source of support will like-
ly be his wife. Through their commitment in
an intimate relationship, mutual support is
a natural extension. He can seek her help in
his own spiritual growth, and together they
can share prayer and ministry concerns.

Beyond his wife, a deacon’s next resource
is his children and other family members.
Family members usually know the deacon
better than any one else does. Such intimate
knowledge is the nature of family life. The
deacon’s willingness to listen, to allow space
for their observations about his spiritual and
personal needs; his granting of freedom to
family members to interact with him, to tell
him the truth about himself, to encourage
him, and above all to lift him up in prayer as
he also prays for them—this style of family
life will offer the deacon a powerful founda-
tion of support. A deacon’s family will offer
him affirmation; and they will, if he permits
it, confront him with the gap between his
talk and his walk. Sharing his faith, leading
his family in worship, admitting his failures,
and confessing his sinfulness to his own
flesh and blood are the day-by-day experi-
ences out of which powerful ministry can be
born.

There will be times when his family, his
wife in particular, will feel led and free to
go with him as part of a ministry team. This
pattern of husband-wife teaming in his min-
istry will often come about as a by-product
of their shared prayer life. Certainly, neither
the deacon nor the church should expect
this to be a part of her job description as a
deacon’s wife.

Involvement of wife and children in minis-
tering, where confidentiality is not violat-
ed, usually helps families feel positive about
the deacon’s ministry and less jealous of the
time it requires.

The Church Fellowship Provides Support
A deacon’s church is an indispensable part
of the deacon’s human support system. This
includes the fellowship with church mem-
ers, his pastor, other staff ministers, and his
fellow deacons. It involves also the organiza-
tions of his congregation.

The deacon needs and receives support
from his church through their prayer and
encouragement. The church is the dea-
con’s larger family. He cannot stay alive and
empowered spiritually without them. He is
made for fellowship with his brothers and
sisters in Jesus Christ.

The deacon’s pastor, other staff ministers,
and his fellow deacons are other key links
in the deacon’s support chain. In family care
ministry deacons will discover a special
camaraderie with the pastor, other ministers,
and deacons. They will share the fellowship of committed persons who know something of the joy that comes from making oneself available to care for others.

In many churches deacons draw closer as they share and pray for special ministry concerns during regular deacons’ meetings. Deacons report that this time of prayer with other deacons, interceding in behalf of known needs among God’s people, has become the most meaningful portion of their deacons’ meetings.

Ministry has a way of confronting deacons with their limitations and inadequacies. It is the truth of these inadequacies that binds deacons together in a fellowship of prayer. When deacons do not keep prayer as the center of their spiritual life, they lose touch with all the spiritual power and peace that can flow from it.

Fellowship with the pastor, other ministers, and fellow deacons will also grow through training sessions and other times when experiences are shared, failures acknowledged, and skills sharpened.

The pastor can also be helpful at the point of referral. He probably knows the community network of helpers better than any other person available. Your ability to help others will sometimes depend less on your capacity to help directly and more on your willingness to seek referral suggestions. If a psychologist or psychiatrist is needed to help with some person’s depression, which one is the best? What if a certain couple cannot afford to pay fees for counseling needed to resolve conflict in their relationship? Is such help available for little or no cost? Your pastor can usually offer this kind of assistance.

The deacon has the power of his church’s organization and structure. A social worker once commented, “I’d give anything to have all the backup support that different groups in your church offer.”

One deacon needed help to combat the isolation he knew a recently widowed woman was experiencing. She was withdrawing from all contact with other persons. He telephoned that woman’s Sunday School teacher and encouraged class members to visit and include the widow in the life of the class. Her attendance at a weekday class meeting was the turning point as the entire class, who well understand her needs, focused on her and loved her back into fellowship with others.

A teenager from a deprived home, financially and otherwise, did not feel at home with the dressy tone of her class on Sunday mornings in her small-town church. A deacon who cared for her alerted a GA group who met on a weekday afternoon to visit and invite her. She became vitally involved in this group where clothing was casual and a leader had instilled compassion and sensitivity into the hearts of her girls.

A young man, reputed to be on drugs, had dropped out of worship attendance. His deacon made contact with the softball coach for the lad’s age group. He responded and developed an in-depth relationship with his coach, a turning-around experience that proved to be the making of a new person.

God calls no deacon to a caring ministry without also providing resources for power. It is God’s desire to supply the power needed for effective caring to meet people’s needs.

The deacon’s most basic contact point with God’s power in his own conversion experience. That power is nurtured and enlarged as he grows into a mature Christian life through a disciplined walk.
**Teaching Suggestions**

Begin the session by giving a quick overview of the upcoming sessions. Explain that the next session will give some practical suggestions for deacons who want to develop caring skills.

* Get a roll of aluminum foil, and tear off enough pieces (approximately 12 by 12 inches) for each participant.

Give each person a piece of aluminum foil. Ask each one to fold, tear, or mold the aluminum foil into a creation that describes the word power. After a few minutes ask several to share their creations. Spend a few minutes talking about the meaning of power. Blend this into the introductory material about power for ministry.

* Make a poster displaying this outline of the chapter.

Power for Ministry
I. Power Through God’s Presence
   A. Provides Adequacy for Ministry
   B. Provides Motivation to Care for the Needs of Others
   C. Provides Sensitivity to the Needs of Others
   D. Provides Guidance in Using Caring Skills

II. The Power of a Human Support System
   A. The Deacon’s Family Provides Support
   B. The Church Fellowship Provides Support

Put up the poster after the information under the introduction has been given. Read through the outline aloud to let the participants know your subject matter for the session.

Follow the outline under “Power Through God’s Presence.” Lecture on the four subtopics. Emphasize the needs of deacons in these four areas.

Under the second part of the outline, “The Power of a Human Support System,” talk about each subtopic. As you relate the content material, invite volunteers to give testimonies of how their families and the church fellowship have given personal and ministry support.

Conclude by reinforcing several of the things you have said during the session. Do this by quickly going back over the outline and making a short, meaningful comment about each subtopic. Emphasize the fact that the Holy Spirit is the most important power for ministry.

*Indicates suggestions to be prepared before the session.