

You got roped in. Or maybe you are now a deacon as a result of a prayer you've been praying for years. Are you feeling just a bit uncertain? Doubtful? Skeptical?

Are you wondering if missing three dozen evenings with your family over the next three years will be worth it?

You are going to invest 144 hours of your personal time (at least); will it be rewarding?

Maybe you've never liked meetings much; now you're going to sit through endless hours of meetings over the next months.

What to do?

Before you go to next month's meeting, make a commitment to pray every day about being a deacon. Pray that God will make you a blessing to your fellow deacons, and that he will continue to strengthen and prepare you for this leadership role. Pray about your gifts – offer them to be used freely by God as he wills; and pray that your gifts will be nurtured in healthy, lively, nourishing meetings.

Have coffee with someone you know in your congregation who has been a deacon for a few terms in her or his lifetime. Ask questions; listen; invite stories; ask for advice; ask for prayer.

Does your church have job descriptions for deacons? Review this. Give some thought to your own giftedness. What do you bring? Do you lean toward hands-on service? Are you more comfortable with administrative roles? Do you tend to be quiet in meetings? Perhaps you find it easier to talk than to listen? Pray about your own personal contribution to the Deacons and their work in your church. Listen for God's leading about how you can best contribute your gifts, and stir up the gifts of your colleagues.

Do you know someone else who is a deacon who might be your coffee partner for a while, someone to pray with, to reflect with, to encourage each other, to help each other be accountable?

Here are some questions to reflect on:

1. Do you anticipate a rich devotional time with your diaconal colleagues at most meetings? How could you contribute to that?
2. Have you given some thought to your typical routine and weekly schedule over the next year?
3. Have you anticipated some planned time for deacons' meetings, for subcommittee work, for visits, a little extra personal devotion time?

4. How about talking with your spouse about these expectations for time away, and what you would like your spouse to pray about on your behalf while you serve?

RULE 1: Plenty of prayer.

RULE 2: Don't go it alone.

RULE 3: Look for ways to humbly and assertively make the contributions God has equipped you to make.

RULE 4: Anticipate God's blessings on your church and your council and your deacons. When you are tempted to be cynical, discouraged, or judgmental, don't. These are luxuries you can't afford. They get in the way of obedience.

RULE 5: Be informed. Do your homework. Prepare for meetings. Yes, it's true that no one is as busy as you are. Well, almost no one. But take time to do what it takes to make your participation a contribution to the group and to the task.

RULE 6: Listen and then listen some more...to your friends, to complainers, to fellow deacons, to the hurting, to the lonely. And above all, listen to God who loves you, who is blessing what you are doing, and who makes you ready for the task to which he is calling you.