IN THIS THESIS:
The central theoretical argument has been stated in chapter 1 as follows: The results gleaned from the study of the diakon- word group in the New Testament make valuable and central contributions in compiling a Biblically based ministry plan for a local South African Reformed congregation.

Through thorough macro- and micro-analysis of the narratological structure, it has been shown that analysis of the context in which the diakon- word group is used is necessary to determine the semantic possibility of the word where it is used.

The results of the exegesis were applied to congregational ministry: The ministry of the congregation should be seen as God’s ministry that is built on the foundations of the apostles’ teaching. The ministry should be Christ-centred. The aim of the ministry should be to equip people to be representatives of Christ, to be diaconal in their way of live, doing their diakonia as part of their daily walk.
The diakon- word group in the New Testament and congregational ministry

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De diakon-woordgroep in het Nieuwe Testament en gemeentebediening

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Synopsis

This chapter serves as an introduction to eight exegetical essays related to the use of the διάκονος word group in the New Testament. The choice of Scriptural passages was determined by the goal of the study: the results should be of use for the praxis of congregational ministry and the compilation of a ministry plan for a local congregation in the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Sections of some of the chapters in this study were previously published as articles in scientific journals. Further research was added to the chapters to answer the research questions of the study and to reach the objectives.

The chapter starts with the background of the study and the problem statement. The current state of research on the διάκονος word group is provided. The second part of the chapter focuses on the research methodology of the study: a description is provided on how the explication, application, exegesis and hermeneusis were done in the study. The third part of the chapter states the aim and objectives of the study. The fourth part highlights the central theoretical argument.

1.1 Background and problem statement

From the start of Christianity, the gathering of believers in groups (congregations) has played a central role. Directly after Pentecost (Acts 2), the first of these groups were formed. ‘In the ensuing two millennia, faith communities or congregations are found worldwide in which followers of the Way or Good News met to worship’ (Schoeman 2015:64). In the book of Acts, the growth and development of various groups are described. Most of the letters of the New Testament is addressed to congregations or ministers of congregations. The results of the exegesis done in the...
current study will be applied to the field of congregational ministry or ecclesiology (Schoeman 2015:65).

[Ecclesiology] focuses on understanding the church in terms of its nature, ministry and organization. Attention is given to such matters as biblical and theological foundations, historical ecclesiologies (different views of the church in different periods of time), and church polity (how different churches have been organized). All of this is related to God’s redemptive purpose in the world (Van Gelder 2000:26).

1.1.1 Ecclesiology

There are various perspectives on what the church is. When this question is asked, the answer of Catholics and Protestants would differ, and even the answers amongst the Lutherans, Anglicans and Calvinists. This study is not the place to describe the differences and is done from a Reformed perspective. What is the church then according to the Reformed perspective? The way the identity of the church is viewed influences all that is done in the church in the long run. The perspectives on the identity of the church discussed below form part of the meta-theoretical assumptions of this study (Manser 2009:7024; Breed 2013b).

When we encounter the church, we move into spiritual territory that occupies earthly terrain. We encounter the living God in the midst of our humanity. We encounter the Spirit of God dwelling in the midst of a people who are created and formed into a unique community. As these communities study the Bible, examine their history, and explore their settings, they take on particular names, styles, structures and behaviors – and they become diverse (Van Gelder 2000:14, 15).

This diversity is one of the issues the study will investigate. When congregations decide on the ministry within their congregation and externally, the decision may be based on various reasons. The leaders of a congregation may be impressed with the apparent success of a particular approach in another congregation and can, therefore, decide to implement the same approach in their congregation. Their assumption is then that a particular approach will work everywhere, if it works in a particular congregation (Schwarz 1999:98–100). They may also be convinced by research literature that the writing is on the wall for the church if radical change does not occur; they may also be convinced that a change in the structure of ministry will bring about a change in the hearts of people (Gibbs & Coffey 2000:17–40). Change
may occur for the sake of change without the underlying assumptions for such an approach clearly stipulated (Olivier 2002:47). Dreyer (2006) highlights the importance of capacity for a variety of convictions and approaches with regard to congregational ministry in congregations. However, she also points out that there should be limits to variety; otherwise, relativism can occur (Dreyer 2006:1312, 1331). Schwarz (1999:10) indicates the same necessity for stipulating limits in the so-called ‘church growth movement’. The church growth movement focused on the growth of the church in quantity. Often the theological foundation was harmed during this initiative. Different methods were, therefore, used to curb this growth (Young-gi 2004).

McNeal (2009:43–45) states that an increasing number of people are expressing fundamental doubts about the viability of the church. In his book, he explains what he thinks the answer to this dilemma should be. But should this be viewed as a dilemma? Should congregations alter their ways according to McNeal’s insights? Perhaps his insights should be viewed as opinions. Following this trend, it is possible to refer to a vast body of writers and even movements as the ‘emerging church’ movement. Even in this movement there are opposing opinions.\(^3\) Van Gelder (2000:14–23) describes the development of North American churches in different denominations in terms of different accents with regard to structure and orientation. He also describes various solutions that were applied in the past to the organizational question in congregations. His conclusion is that all ‘of these approaches tend to treat the church in sociological or organizational terms’. He (p. 23) further states that these ‘approaches reduce the church to a set of ministries administered through management skills to maintain effectiveness’. However, the question that should be answered is what the essence of the church is before what the church establish what they should do and how. It is of the utmost importance to gain clarity with regard to what the church is.

The answers researchers reach concerning this question will largely depend on the sources they use and how they make use of these sources. The church can be

\(^3\) The ‘emerging church’ movement is offered as one of the solutions to prevent the church from collapsing. According to this solution, a process of deconstruction should be followed so that a total break with the past can be made in order to reconstruct the church in accordance with the demands of post-modernism (Lyotard 1993:41; Ströh & Jaatinen 2001:148–165; Pieterse 2005:5; Lose 2003:12–17; Niemandt 2007:50). Within this ‘emerging church’ movement, different approaches occur (Carson 2009:2; Devine 2009:7). In some of the emergent churches, the distinction between the world and the church is blurred. Devine (2009:8) distinguishes two main streams within this movement: the dogma-friendly and the dogma-hostile streams. The dogma-hostile stream may vary from being suspicious of dogma to a total antipathy to any dogma (cf. also Barbour & Toews 2010).
studied from a sociological, psychological of historical perspective or any other perspective and true answers can be obtained. The question to what the church should be can only be answered in truth when the source document of Christianity is studied. As previously stated, the current study made use of the Bible as the source document to establish what the church should be in order to answer the questions pertaining to what the church should do and how she should do it. These questions were approached from a Reformed perspective.

The study field of this research was narrowed to one word group – the διάκον- word group – as it is used in the New Testament.

The διάκον- word group, as it is used in the New Testament, will be investigated. Within this framework, this study attempts to answer the following two questions: First, what is the contribution of the διάκον- word group in the New Testament towards determining what the church should be? Second, what light does it shed on what the church should do?

1.1.2 The διάκον- word group in the New Testament

Research on the διάκον- word group was triggered anew by the study of Collins (1990) and later gained momentum with studies by Hentschel (2007, 2013) and others (Donfried 1990; Arndt, Danker & Bauer 2000; Gooder 2006; Latvus 2010; Breed & Breed 2010; Breed 2012a). These researchers all agree that the διάκον- word group does not have the exclusive or general meaning of humble service motivated by love for one’s fellow human beings, but rather appears in the semantic context of a representative messenger and envoy and that the context of use should determine the ad hoc meaning.

However, the following two gaps were identified in current research (cf. Hartley 2004:367–380):

- The impact of new research results has still not been applied enough to the field of practical theology in general and congregational ministry in particular. This study will not endeavor to apply the results to the general field of practical
theology but only to congregational ministry as a part of the study field of practical theology.

In 2008, Benedict (2008:116, 117) maintained that Collins’s work has not been noticed in the German discussion around ‘Diakonie’. However, this has changed and a lively debate has emerged in Germany and other countries (Rüegger & Sigrist 2011:79–80).

The importance of Collins’s research on the διάκονος word group must not be underestimated. Hartley (2004:379) is of the opinion, ‘Collins's research has radical implications for general Protestant assertions about the “ministry of all Christians”, particularly in relation to the nature of the episcopacy and an understanding of ordination.’ Clarke (2008) purports:

Changes in opinion on New Testament subjects normally go unnoticed within the church. Just occasionally, however, a change takes place that has an enormous impact on the life and self-understanding of people within the church – this is one of those occasions. If Collins is right in his theory, then we have before us a new way of viewing not only the diaconate but ministry as a whole. (p. 103)

Collins (2014) highlights the following about the impact of his research results:

Working with such changed semantic parameters – and totally freed from the constricted ambit of lowly service – we will necessarily arrive at ecclesiological conclusions substantially at variance with principles espoused within the contemporary diakonic consensus. (p. 182)

The work of Collins has been widely acclaimed (Benedict 2008:117–129). Collins’s research results were used in the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Arndt, Danker & Bauer 2000). However, criticism was also given with regard to his research (Dunderberg 2003; Dietzel 2003).

It is, therefore, of the absolute essence that the theory of Collins should be thoroughly tested to ensure that the research results can be applied correctly to the congregational ministry.

Although most parts of Scripture where this word group appears have been studied, not all of them have been adequately investigated. This study’s unique contribution to
this discussion is the investigation of the διάκονος-word group in the broader syntactical context where it is used.

Moreover, often the Scriptural context in which the word group appears has not been taken into account adequately (Collins 1990:12, 48, 245, 248; Hentschel 2007:10, 16, 214, 236, 248, 257, 26, 286, 340, 341).

Hamd (2013) states:

What is needed today among missiologists, theologians and practitioners is a rethinking and reframing of the theology of diakonia to create new pathways, studded with theological benchmarks. (p. 95)

This study evaluates the latest results from research on the διάκονος-word group critically and does original exegesis, which can be applied to the praxis of congregational ministry.

1.2 Methodology

The different objectives stated below will be addressed in individual chapters. The final two chapters draw conclusions from the previous chapters and describe some trajectories that could be derived for practical ministry.

The basis for the exegetical method that is used in this study can be explained as explication, application, exegesis and hermeneusis.

Lategan (2009a:23–63) describes nine ‘defining moments in the development of biblical hermeneutics’. These are: the Early Church; the Reformation; the Enlightenment and the rise of historical consciousness; the impact of the first World War and the existential quest for the meaning of life; the lasting legacy of Rudolf Bultmann; developments in the immediate post-Bultmann era; the ‘linguistic revolution’; structuralism and literary theory; reception theory and its consequences.

From all of the studies mentioned above and below, the following insight is gleaned regarding the explication, application, exegesis and hermeneusis that can be followed in doing exegesis from a Reformed perspective: there is a huge gap between the readers/researchers of today and writers and their first readers. This gap can be ascribed to historical, cultural and linguistic differences (Du Toit 2009a:108–109). The historical situation of writers and their original audience are to
a large extent unknown and can be viewed as the motivation for writing documents. Problems (if present) are addressed in documents and practical situations are usually explained to readers. Cultural situations can relate to the meaning of certain expressions while customs can refer to the use of certain articles (Thiselton 2009:54; Du Toit 2009a:111). Linguistic factors refer to the meaning of words, the type of literature and use of tenses (Jordaan, Janse van Rensburg & Breed 2011:234–256). Lategan (2009a) states the following in this regard:

Hermeneutics cannot be only a question of method, striving for objectively secured knowledge, but must open up a dialogical process through which possibilities for existence are disclosed. Thus a dialogue unfolds between present and past, between text and interpreter, each with its own horizon. The goal of interpretation is the fusion of these horizons; the medium through which this takes place is language. (p. 17)

To understand the different exegetical approaches, it is helpful to discuss the different role-players in the exegetical process: authors, texts and readers (Du Toit 2009a:112–120). The different approaches can also be formulated as ‘behind the text, the text and in front of the text, or: source, message, destination’ (Lategan 2009b:71). Different exegetical methods emphasise one or more of these role-players as the primary research field (Thiselton 2009:118–120).

Lategan (2009b:89) illustrates the communicative process from an ancient text to the reader of today in Figure 1: The communicative process from an ancient text to the reader of today (Lategan 2009b:89) (p. 8) and maintains that this figure represents a holistic view of the communication process and describes a complex procedure, which needs a plurality of methods for understanding a text. This figure also serves as a map that provides direction for determining where researchers are in the communication process. It also keeps researchers from over-accentuating one of the role-players in the communication process.

When we look at Figure 1, the mimetic axis of representation has to do with (re)constructing the world of texts. Each sentence (spoken or written) in a text links back to a specific situation. Authors use signs from the reservoir available to them – combining these signs to form a comprehensive whole (Du Toit 2009a:113–114).
These signs represent the world they come from. Texts speak about the world they come from and of the motivation that urged authors to write about that world. ‘The task of hermeneutics therefore is to understand the world of the text as well as possible’ (Lategan 2009b:87; cf. Thiselton 2009:193). Rudolph’s (2007:17) warning should not be discarded. In trying to determine the situation of an original author and readers, the exegete can go too far. The data and the meaning of a text are then chosen on a subjective basis and two researchers can – when making use of the same method – obtain opposite results (Lincoln 1990:lxxiv–lxxv). The reconstruction of a text is done via reading the text and is influenced by the world of the readers – the preconceptions and presuppositions of readers bring something new to a text (Thiselton 2009:29).

The rhetorical axis describes the communicative thrust of a text. The original human author is not present anymore. ‘What remains in the text are certain traces of the
author’ (Lategan 2009b:88) – the point of view from which stories are told and the way in which authors present themselves. From these traces, readers can obtain clues to construct the implied author. The same is true of the intended readers of a text. A text anticipates certain readers. From the instructions, allusions, references and the type of language used, the implied reader can also be constructed in a certain sense (Du Toit 2009a:116–119). It is, therefore, not the real reader that you meet here but a textual construct. ‘What the real reader will do with the text, can no longer be controlled by the author. The author can only make an appeal to the real reader via the text’ (Lategan 2009b:88). Readers want to understand the intention of an original author and will go back via the instructions in the text to understand the appeal of an original author. In this process, it is important that readers should consult other readers who have read the text before them. Perhaps they made notes of their findings and readers can then converse with these former readers about the meaning of the text. We should read with as many as possible preceding readers and be open for the interpretations of subsequent readers (Lategan 2009b:90, 91). Through this process, readers can reach an as complete as possible understanding of the message in the here and now – the world as a field of action (Thiselton 2009:306–307).4

What Zimmerman (2010:60) highlights about the relationship between faith and theology is also applicable in connection with the author of the Bible. When readers are of the conviction that there is another author except the original human authors (Holy Spirit-driven), it can have a substantial impact on the exegesis of a specific part of Scripture. Vorster (2014) formulates this meta-theoretical conviction as follows:

Ongeag die chronologies historiese verskille in datering van Bybeltekste, en kontrasterende historiese feite, vorm die Skrif ’n teologiese eenheid en bevat dit ’n deurlopende ontvouing van die Godsopenbaring wat nie afhanklik is van die chronologiese geskiedenis nie. Hierdie deurlopende openbarring wat inhoudelijk en nie chronologies is nie, word verskillend getipeer. Die deurlopende ontvouing van die Godsopenbarring word genoem openbaringsgeskiedenis en is veral ontwikkel in die Protestantse tradisie deur Cullmann (1948:157) en Barth (1961:136). (p. 64)

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4 See Vorster (2014:60–82) for an explanation of the use of the Bible in reformed hermeneuses.
When the exegete is sure of the Spirit as author, not only will the world of the author of a Bible book be taken into consideration but also the place of the Bible book or pericope in the whole of the Bible. Some themes or concepts running through the whole Bible can also contribute to the understanding of a specific portion of the Bible. Examples of such concepts are ‘the kingdom of God’ (Bright 1980; Cavalletti 2012, 2013; Van der Walt 1986) and ‘the covenant of God’ (Gentry & Wellum 2012; Vorster 2014:65, 66). The principle that the part should be read in light of the whole and the whole in light of the part is then not only applicable to separate Bible books but to the whole of the Bible as well. If one speaks of author intention, not only the human author’s intent should be considered but also the intent of the Holy Spirit with a Bible book or a pericope within the whole Bible (Jordaan, Janse van Rensburg & Breed 2011:232–234).

Nel (2014:267) states, ‘[T]he exegesis of a biblical text has become a complicated enterprise requiring a careful declaration of one’s presuppositions as well as one’s choice of exegetical practices’. With the expansion of and specialization in contemporary methods, it is not possible to discuss every method here, because it is not the main focus of this study. However, the following sources can be read for the methods of discourse analysis, redaction criticism, narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism, speech act analysis, social scientific criticism, feminist and post-colonial readings: Sanders and Davies (1989) and Vorster (2009).

In this study, a text-orientated or problem-orientated multidisciplinary exegetical method was followed (Viljoen 2016:11). The first step in the process was to read the text and during an interaction with the text certain questions came to the fore. Social questions require a social instrument to answer them and semantic questions require a semantic instrument – for each question an appropriate instrument should be used. Different methods should, therefore, not be viewed as mutually exclusive. The questions or problems presented by the text should determine the method used in the exegesis in order to unlock the meaning of the text as best as possible (Nel 2014:270). When the method of plurality is used, the different views – an author-centered text, a text-centered text and a reader-centered text – are all addressed. The exegete can gain a more holistic understanding of the text instead of only
making use of one method in isolation. The point of departure can be described as a grammatical-historical method.\textsuperscript{5}

With regard to the meaning of a word, it is important to highlight a few basic distinctions. In a theological dictionary, one can obtain various meanings in which a specific word can be applied. This can be called the meaning potential of a word. Exegetes should try to determine as near as possible in which one or more of these potential meanings a word has been used in a particular passage. Only the context can finally make it clear to exegetes what the meaning of the word can be in a particular verse, chapter and book.

When the meaning of a passage from the Bible is applied to a current situation, exegetes should determine aspects of continuity and discontinuity. Not all of the aspects concerning the meaning of a text with regard to the original author and readers are applicable to readers of today (discontinuity). The question exegetes should grapple with is how the meaning of the passage for the original readers can be made applicable to a current situation (continuity). The aspects that are not applicable (discontinuity) should be handled as cultural-historical information that cannot be applied to the situation today but may be used to clarify aspects of continuity. An example is found in Mark 8:1-7 (see chapter 6). In verse 6, the evangelist relates that Jesus commanded the people to sit on the ground before He gave them bread and fish to eat. Clearly, the command is part of the historical discontinuity of the text. The continuity of what is described in Mark 8:1-7 is the revelation of the power of Jesus to do what is impossible for man to do (cf. Jordaan, Janse van Rensburg & Breed 2011: 248).

To summarise, the grammatical-historical exegetical method will be the basis of the methodology that will be followed in this study.

Grammatically, a discourse and contextual analyses of the texts will be made to discover structures and themes that could give an indication how the original author and readers could have understood the verse in which the διάκων- word group as well as the diakon- word itself occurs. The method can also be described as narrative

\textsuperscript{5} For a more detailed description of the grammatical-historical method of exegesis, see Jordaan, Janse van Rensburg and Breed (2011).
critical. The critical analysis of language, style, idiom and literary genre is part of this method.

The historical part of the method will be attended to by asking the question if the historical information available could in any way contribute to understanding the meaning of the texts and words in their context. Another part of the historical analysis is the revelational-historical research. The reformed churches believe that God reveals himself in an ongoing manner in the first to the last book of the Bible. Every book, pericope and verse finds itself somewhere on this line of revelational history. The point on this line is determined by comparing Scripture with Scripture. The question is: what is the significance of this point or place of this book, pericope or verse when comparing it to the rest of Scripture.

All of this research is done to determine what the indicatives and imperatives of the relevant texts are. Determining the indicative and imperative will bring to the fore what is revealed about God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in those texts. Some of the commands (imperatives) will only apply to the first readers; others will also apply to the current reader. Through this process of hermeneutics, the applicable guidelines of every verse, pericope or book studied will be determined and practically applied to congregational ministry in a local church.

The results from the different texts or sections will then be compared to each other to point out similarities and trends in the use of the διάκονος- word group. These results will eventually be applied to the ministry in local congregations.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

1.3.1 Aim
The aim of the study is to perform an in-depth exegesis of different passages where the διάκονος- word group is used in the New Testament to establish the meaning of the word group used in a particular context and to discover possible implications for a congregational ministry.

1.3.2 Objectives
The following will be investigated:
• The use of the διάκονος word group in Ephesians 3 and 4 to establish the place of διακονία in the ministry of congregations.

• The use of the διάκονος word group in the two-tiered narrative of the Gospel of John to determine how the followers of Jesus can make God visible through διακονία.

• The use of the διάκονος word group in John 12:26 to determine the relationship between διακονία and following Jesus.

• The use of the διάκονος word group in 1 Corinthians 12 to establish what the ministry of children in congregations should entail.

• The use of the διάκονος word group in Mark 10:45 to determine if love and compassion can be part of the meaning of the διάκονος word group – in conversation with John N. Collins.

• The use of the διάκονος word group in 1 Peter to establish what διακονία during suffering should look like and what the διακονία of elderly people in congregations should be.

• The use of the διάκονος word group in Acts 6 to establish if it describes the appointment of deacons.

• The possible content and essence of work of the διάκονος in the New Testament and how it can be applicable to the essence of the work of deacons today in local congregations.

• A vision for a ministry plan of a local Reformed congregation

1.3.3 Research questions
To achieve the goal of the study, it was necessary to answer certain questions by exegeting certain passages. An important point of departure of the study was that

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6 *Application* is in this study understood as a movement from the results of the exegetical and hermeneutical research to the practical situation in a congregation. Full application cannot be done without empirical study of a congregation’s situation. In this study, the application will be made to the task of the deacon in general. This application will need further application when the practical situation of a congregation is taken into account.

7 A *vision* is seen as a possibility grounded on scientific research results. A vision states the principles that can be applied to a concrete situation of a congregation. Applying a vision is a hermeneutical action that will also build on the investigation of the practical situation of the congregation, preferably by scientific empirical research. The principles stated in the vision should then be applied to the results of the empirical study to formulate a ministry plan. In this study, the principles of a vision are formulated based on the study of the daemon- word group. The vision that will be formulated does not pretend to give all the principles that are necessary for a ministry plan of a local congregation; it will only give some principles from a certain point of view.
these passages should be exegeted comprehensively and in the context of a specific Bible book or letter. To try to work with every passage in the New Testament where the διάκον- word group occurs was outside the limits of this study. A choice had, therefore, to be made as to what minimum questions should be answered to achieve the goal and what passages should be used to answer the questions. This study was mostly compiled from published articles of the researcher. A choice was made out of the articles that can answer the questions and other articles can be written to answer additional questions.

The motivation for the choice of Scriptural passages is provided in more detail in each separate chapter. The researcher deemed the questions set out in the table below (*Table 1: Schema of research report*) should be answered to reach the goal of compiling a ministry plan:

**Table 1: Schema of research report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What role should διακονία play in the ministry of a congregation to answer to God’s plan for that ministry? | Chapter 2  
_ The use of διακονία in the ministry of the church, according to Ephesians, p. 17 |
| How does the believer represent Christ in this world with his/her διακονία? | Chapter 3  
_ The use of the διακον- word group in the two-tiered narrative of the Gospel of John: To make God visible through διακονία, p. 53 |
| What is the relationship between διακονία and following Jesus?           | Chapter 4  
_ The use of the διακον- word group in John 12:26: Διακονία as following Jesus, p. 73 |
| What is the place of children (and other special groups) in the διακονία of congregations? | Chapter 5  
_ The use of the διακον- word group in 1 Corinthians 12: The ministry of the child in the congregation, p. 91 |
| If Mark uses the διακονία- word group to                                                                                  | Chapter 6 |

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8 Further on in this text, only the male form of the personal pronoun will be used to indicate both genders.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>only express service to God, does the context of Mark 8–10 point to the use of the word group to also express an attitude of care and grace towards other people?⁹</td>
<td><em>Diakonia: In conversation with John N. Collins</em>, p. 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the use of the διάκονος-word group in 1 Peter, two related questions can be addressed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) What is the role of διακονία in times of suffering in congregations?</td>
<td><em>Chapter 7</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) What should the role and attitude of the elders be in the pastoral care of a congregation?</td>
<td><em>The use of the διακονος-word group in 1 Peter: Διακονία in suffering and the διακονία of the elder in the congregation</em>, p. 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The following two questions concern the work of the deacon:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Should the service of deacons form part of a congregation? Many churches and researchers assumed Acts 6 to be the description of the essence and content of the work of deacons. This assumption is tested by an in-depth exegesis of Acts 6, according to context.</td>
<td><em>Chapter 8</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on the diaconal service based on Acts 6:1–7, p. 186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) What can be deduced from previous research done in this study and other passages where the διάκονος-word group is used with regard to the essence and content of the work of deacons?</td>
<td><em>Chapter 9</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The essence and content of the διακονία of the deacon</em>, p. 211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What vision for a ministry plan of a local Reformed congregation can be compiled from the exegesis on the διάκονος-word group?</td>
<td><em>Chapter 10</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vision for a ministry plan of a local Reformed congregation</em>, p. 246</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁹ Some other claims of Collins and other researchers are addressed in other chapters.
The research study does not claim to be comprehensive. Other texts where the word group is used can also be studied comprehensively. Moreover, other texts in which the διάκον- word group is used are compared to the results of the in-depth exegesis of selected passages.

There are many angles from which ministry plans can be studied. The results of this study can be used to compile different ministry plans to be applied in different situations and in various denominations.

The two main questions the study aimed to answer were: What are the different meanings of the διάκον- word group used in the researched passages and what are the implications for ministries in local Reformed congregations?

1.4 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the results gained from the study of the διάκον- word group in the New Testament offer valuable and central contributions in compiling a Biblically based ministry plan for local Reformed congregations.
Chapter 2

The place of διακονία in the ministry of the church, according to Ephesians

Synopsis

This chapter endeavours, by means of an exegetical analysis of the letter, to determine the view the writer of Ephesians had on congregational ministry. The chapter also attempts to demonstrate the importance of sound Scriptural exegesis when a congregation wants to base their ministry on the Bible. The chapter first investigates the structure of Ephesians, and then makes deductions that can be viewed as appropriate principles of ministry. Based on these deductions, the chapter suggests guidelines for the pastoral ministry of congregations and critically compares these deductions with the opinions of other researchers. Finally, the place of διακονία in the ministry, according to Ephesians, is determined based on the results of the exegesis.¹⁰

2.1 Introduction

The church is an important theme in Ephesians. The word ‘church’ refers mainly in Ephesians to the universal church. ‘All nine references in the letter point to the Christian community in its totality’ (O’Brien 1999:25). The place of the church in God’s eternal plan and the essence of what the church is are both described in Ephesians (Barth 1984:477–478). Lincoln (1990) states the following about Ephesians:

Within the framework of an extended thanksgiving these chapters [1–3] contain a reminder to the Gentile Christian readers of the privileges and status they enjoy as believers in Christ and members of the Church, reinforcing for them their significance in God’s plan for history and the cosmos. The second part of the letter then constitutes an appeal to live in the Church and in the world in the light of these realities and not simply to become merged into the ethos of the surrounding culture. There is an explicit link between the two parts through the notion of calling. (p. xxxvi)

¹⁰ Parts of this chapter have been published in the article, ‘Ministry to the congregation according to the letter to the Ephesians’ (Breed 2015a).
From the above-mentioned explanation, it can be deduced that the letter to the Ephesians speaks about ecclesiology and is, therefore, appropriate material to investigate ministerial guidelines for the church.

The διάκονος- word group is used three times in the letter to the Ephesians. Firstly, it is used in 3:7\(^\text{11}\) where Paul describes himself as ‘a minister (διάκονος) according to the gift of the grace of God’. The second time it is used in 4:12, where the task of the apostles, prophets, evangelists and the shepherds and teachers is described: They should ‘equip the saints for the work of ministry (ἔργον διακονίας)’. Lastly, it is used when Tychicus is described as a ‘faithful minister in the Lord’ (πιστὸς διάκονος ἐν Κυρίῳ). This chapter focuses on the place and meaning of the first two occurrences of the word group in the letter compared to the use of the word group in the rest of the New Testament.

2.2 Background of Ephesians

The author, recipients and historical background are discussed in the following section.

2.2.1 Author and recipients

Much has been written on the authorship and recipients of Ephesians. It is not necessary to discuss this in depth in this chapter (Floor 2011:468). For various views on the author and recipients, see the work of the following researchers: Guthrie (1961:127,128), Lincoln (1990:lx) and Best (2004:14). For further discussions of the author, addressees and general background of Ephesians, see Hoehner (2002:1–60), Mbennah (2009:37–4; 2016:110, 111) and Fowl (2012:1–28). The consensus is that Ephesians is presented in the form of a letter. As to the question of the literary form of the letter, Suh (2006:94) concludes that it is ‘safer and more reasonable to base our understanding on what is more certain rather than on what is not, and so we should take the epistolary form of the letter more seriously’. He further maintains, ‘The view that Ephesians is a circular letter to have been read in more than one place has received wide acceptance’ (Suh 2006:92). The name ‘Paul’ is used to indicate the author of the letter.

\(^{11}\) All the Bible references where a specific book is not indicated refer to Ephesians. If not, the relevant Bible book will be provided.
2.2.2 Historical setting

It is the conclusion of this study, utilizing the principles of discourse analysis, that the Ephesians were discouraged due to the imprisonment of Paul and understandably hostile toward those they perceived to be responsible (i.e., the Jews). As a result, the predominantly Gentile Ephesian church was moving toward separation from the Jewish church and a possible return to a pagan lifestyle. In response, Paul wrote a delicately crafted argument stating: 1) that the sovereign purpose of God was to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to Himself through the work of Jesus Christ, thus creating one new entity, the Church; 2) that his imprisonment should be seen in light of God’s sovereign plan; 3) that there was no place for ethnic division within the body of Christ; and 4) that the predominantly Gentile Ephesian church should therefore stand firm, united with Jewish believers throughout the universal church against the true opposition—i.e., the powers which fuelled their former pagan lifestyle. (p. 9)

2.3 Structure of the letter
The διάκονος word group is used in both parts of the letter (Eph. 3 and 4). The epistle was probably written as a whole and it is, therefore, necessary to view chapters 3 and 4 in the light of the whole letter and the whole letter in the light of chapters 3 and 4. The structure of the letter is, therefore, important.

The different viewpoints regarding the structure of Ephesians are not considered in detail due to the focus of this chapter. See Hoehner (2002:64–69), Mbennah (2009:37, 44–45) and Petrenko (2011:1–25) for these different viewpoints.

A great variety of opinions can be found concerning the purpose and central themes of the letter due to the several themes being addressed continuously. After an in-depth study by means of thought mapping, Bhae (2000:176–184) is convinced that the letter focuses exclusively on the church. He is of the opinion that the core of the letter is summarized in 1:15–19, and he identifies the following three aspects: ‘The hope of God’s calling’ (1:18c), ‘God’s glorious possession of the saints’ (1:18d) and ‘God’s great power to the believers’ (1:19). Stott (1991:29, 87, 143, 211) views the
central theme as the renewing creative work of God. Some researchers are convinced that 1:13–14 is an introduction, in which all the themes touched upon in the rest of the letter are briefly stated (Petrenko 2011:79; Barnard 2009:167). After Hoehner (2002:106) has studied the themes and the purpose of the letter as proposed by several researchers, he concludes that the central theme is love, namely God’s love for human beings and believers’ love for each other. Hoehner (2002:106–114) identifies the following themes in the letter: the Trinity, God as Father, Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology and reconciliation. Lloyd-Jones (1978) emphasises the big difference between Ephesians and the undisputed letters of Paul and states that Ephesians is written from the viewpoint of heaven:

And that is the great theme of this Epistle: it holds us face to face with God and what God is, and what God has done … [We] are told that we are going to be given a view of the glory and the majesty of God.12 (p. 13)

Using different sources, the following central theme may be formulated: the Triune God accomplishes his eternal plan to gather all people and things in and through his church under one Head, Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to the praise of his glory (cf. Pretorius 2006:256).

Most researchers indicate that the letter can be divided into two parts (Lincoln, 1990:xxxvi). The first part (1–3) is doctrinal and the last part (4–6) is the practical application of the first part (Kruger 2005:534). Jordaan (1990), however, shows that there are both doctrinal and practical aspects in both these parts, although the first part deals more with what God has done and the second part with the response of human beings to the grace of God. An overview of these two parts is provided in the following section.

2.3.1 Ephesians 1:1–3:21

Jordaan (1990:52) indicates that the first part of Ephesians is composed in the form of a berakah prayer (cf. also De Klerk 2002:3; Roberts 1984:139) with specific insertions forming part of it. The structure of the first part of Ephesians may be

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presented as suggested in *Figure 2: The structure of Ephesians 1:3–3:21 (Jordaan 1990).* (Cf. also Lincoln 1990:xliii.)

- **A** Praise (1:3) and reason for praise (1:3-14)
- **B** Intercession (1:15-19)
- **C** Confession of faith (1:20-23) and exposition of the confession (2:1-22)
- **B’** Intercession (3:1, 14-19) with an interruption of the intercession (2:2-13)
- **A’** Praise (3:20-21)

*Figure 2: The structure of Ephesians 1:3–3:21 (Jordaan 1990)*

When the reason for praise (B) is analysed, it can be said that the spiritual blessings in heavenly places with which God blesses his children are described repeatedly (4a, 7, 11a, 13). How the believers receive these spiritual blessings is described (5, 8, 11b). The purpose of these blessings are provided (4b, 6, 10, 12, 14b) together with an indication of the time when these blessings are given (4, 10, 11, 14; cf. also De Klerk 2002:4, 5). These blessings are gifts from the Father in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (Lincoln 1990: xxxvi).

Jordaan (1990:52, 53) states that the turning point is found in the confession of faith (1:20–22) and that it describes the main theme of this part, namely Jesus as the Head of the church (cf. Wilder 2010:88). The analysis done by Floor (2011) of this part may be considered as supplementary to Jordaan’s. Floor (2011:471) is convinced that the emphasis in this part falls on the execution of God’s eternal plan (οἰκονομία) (cf. Pester 2009:29). Every subsequent phase of the plan, which is a profound mystery, is fulfilled one after the other in the fullness of time. The core of the plan, which is executed according to the will and good pleasure of God, is that all people are united under Jesus Christ as Head so that there is harmony in the creation again. Yoon (2011:16, 17) states, compared to other letters, that Ephesians is the letter in which the will of God is mentioned the most – the will of God being the complete salvation of the elect in Jesus Christ (cf. 1:5, 9, 11). The will of the flesh opposes the will of God (2:3), and believers are called to try to understand the will of God (5:17) – doing God’s will with all their heart.

The road of salvation, according to 1–3, can be described as follows (cf. Petrenko 2011:145): The problem of human beings existing without God is found in their
decision-making and motivational core, which is corrupt (dead) and, therefore, influenced (enslaved) by their inner rebellion against God and by evil powers (2:1–3). This problem wreaks vengeance on the lives of human beings in the domain of their ethical behaviour (2:1–3) and their relationship with others and God (2:11–22; Petrenko 2011:99–110). The nature of the salvation that God gives is, therefore, entire renewal (life out of death), which flows into moral and spiritual renewal (2:1–5). God grants this renewal by blessing the church with all of the spiritual blessings that are in the heavenly places (1:3). The blessings include gathering the people who are saved from all regions and constituting them as a unity under Christ as Head and by continuously edifying this community (building/body) (2:8–10; 2:14–3:13; Petrenko 2011:11–128). The place where the renewal (soteriological transformation) takes place is, therefore, in the hearts and thoughts of human beings (Petrenko also calls it the ‘the inner being’ and ‘the centre of decision and motivation’).

The soteriological work of the Holy Spirit is found in the fact that He brings human beings back to life with Christ (2:6) and He adds wisdom and knowledge (revelation) of God’s plan (will/mystery) together with a deeper (experiential) knowledge of God (1:17–19; Petrenko 2011:81–96). The Holy Spirit strengthens the inner being of believers (‘the inner being as centre of decision and motivation’) to enable them to understand the scope of Christ’s love for them and within the love community of congregations (3:16–19). Congregations can, therefore, demonstrate the fullness of Christ (1:23) and of God (3:19) in the knowledge that they have already been raised with Christ and are sitting at the right hand of God (2:5, 6). The deeds of believers demonstrate the fruit of this renewal continuously (Petrenko 2011:131–143). In this way, they continue to live by the grace of God and they reveal the mystery of God’s plan to all who see them living (together) in their victory over the evil powers and their own sinful desires (2:1–7; 3:10). All of this takes place through Him, who can do infinitely more than human beings can ever ask for or imagine. Through the generations all glory in the church must be given to the Triune God (3:20, 21; Talbert 2007:103; Barth 1984:388–394).

According to the structure of Hoehner (2002:64), everything presented in 1–3 describes the calling of the church. His perception is affirmed by 4:1, in which the congregation is encouraged to live a life worthy of their calling. This exhortation is
connected to the first part with the particle ‘therefore’ (Οὖν) – it is a conclusion of what is said in the first part (cf. Barth 1984:426).

2.3.2 Ephesians 4:1–6:24

Hoehner (2002:500) shows that Paul uses the particle ‘therefore’ (Οὖν) in this part of his letter to indicate turning points in his argument. Paul repeatedly uses the concept ‘to walk’ in conjunction with the particle ‘therefore’ (ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; cf. Rudolph 2007:72). The only exception occurs in 6:10–20, where Paul uses the concept ‘to stand’ (Ἅστημι) alongside ‘therefore’ (Οὖν) as a structural marker. However, Paul introduces this part with the concept ‘eventually’ (ΛΟΙΠΟΝ) – indicating that he is nearing the end of the letter and summing up. After this part of the letter, only the final greetings remain (6:21–24).

Jordaan (1990:65, 66) also maintains that the particle ‘therefore’ (Οὖν) connects the paracletic section of the letter (4–6) to the first section of the letter. He states that the function of the particle is of a concluding nature. The repetitive use of the particle suggests the paraclesis is the conclusion of the indicative stated in the first part of the letter. Jordaan (1990:64) highlights how the indicative posited in the first part of the letter is repeated several times in the second part. In the second part, the indicative of the first part is repeated and directly connected to the paraclesis.

Hoehner (2002:vii, 62, 66–69; cf. also Fowl 2012:125–214) suggests a structural analysis of chapters 4–6 on the grounds of the structural markers discussed above and presented in Figure 3: Structure of Ephesians 4–6 (Hoehner 2002:vii, 62, 66–69) (p. 24). Based on the structure of Hoehner (2002:vii, 62, 66–69), 4–6 may be regarded as a description of how God’s eternal plan, which is described in 1–3, is realised in the life of the church and of every believer. The description of Petrenko (2011:147, 148) may be used as a foundation and can be amplified as described below:
The conduct of the church (4:1–6:24)

A. Walk in unity (4:1–16)

B. Walk in holiness (4:17–32)

C. Walk in love (5:1–6)

D. Walk in light (5:7–14)

E. Walk in wisdom (5:15–6:9)

F. Stand in warfare (6:10–20)

G. Conclusion (6:21–24)

Figure 3: Structure of Ephesians 4–6 (Hoehner 2002:vii, 62, 66–69)

- The gifts that Christ as the conqueror bestows on his church (every congregation) to equip the believers, serve as the basis not only for the life in which Christ is becoming increasingly visible (4:4–16), but also for the unity of the church (4:3). Barth (1984:430) states, 'The grace given is neither a pillow for sleeping nor a comfortable warm feeling, but a ministry; it is a privilege implying responsibility and action.'

- The soteriological contrasts in the previous/current lifestyles of the believers, according to 1–3 (then/now; dead/live; stranger/house-mate), are reflected in 4–6 and described by the concepts darkness/light, foolishness/wisdom, immaturity/maturity, strife/unity (4:13–16; 4:17–5:2; 5:3–14; 5:15–22; cf. the structure of Hoehner previously provided).

- The contrasts regarding knowledge (the old/new structure of vision and knowledge) are reflected in 4–6 where the believers are encouraged to remember their calling (4:1; cf. 1:4–10, 18, 23; O'Brien 1999:2) and the purpose of God with their salvation in Christ (4:4–6; cf. 1:9–10; 1:20–23; 3:10) on the one hand, and where they are called upon on the other hand to renew the spirit of their minds (4:23) with what they have learnt and with what they have been taught, namely the truth that is in Jesus (4:20–21; cf.1:13; 3:2; cf. the structure of Hoehner previously provided).

- The contrasts in the influence sphere in which human beings live (the old/new powers) are also present in 4–6. What Christ brought about by his victory over
the evil powers, bears fruit in the lives of the believers. This fruit is visible in the new relationship believers have with God as their beloved while they are following Him (5:2, 8; 6:1, 5, 6, 7). They do not follow their own desires anymore; they serve Christ (5:1; cf. 1:5) and they are not slaves of the evil powers anymore. Finally, they allow themselves to be led by the Spirit (4:30, 5:18) and not by selfishness and greediness (4:18–20). Christ’s victory enables believers to live as new people in the unity of mutual love (they should put off the old man and put on the new man through the renewing of their hearts and minds) so that the blessings of God bestowed on them through the work of the Spirit will bear fruit in their lives (4:32). These blessings are summarised by the armour through which believers may be strengthened in the Lord and his great power, thus being able to withstand the evil powers and hold their post as conquerors (6:10–22; cf. the structure of Hoehner previously provided).

2.3.2.1 Deductions
The following deductions can be made from the above exegesis:

- Ephesians describes the eternal will of God – to reunite all things disrupted by sin in a harmonious unity under Christ as Head.

- The successful completion of the eternal plan (οἰκονομία) is nestled in the fact that each of the Trinity members fulfils a part of the plan in unison.

- The core of this eternal plan focuses on God the Father who blesses his chosen people with all of the blessings in the heavenly places. This was made possible by the predestination of the Father and by his gifts – the work of salvation by Christ (the chosen receive, therefore, the gifts ‘in Christ’) and by the seal of the Holy Spirit.

- The heavenly blessings have a dual nature. The Triune God grants certain gifts (such as the gifts of the Spirit, predestination and new life) to people irrespective of their will and decisions. Other gifts (such as knowledge, grace and mutual communion) are granted to believers to put to use in order to reap the benefits of these gifts.

- Intimate personal knowledge of the Triune God’s nature and his plan, which flows from his nature, is used by the Holy Spirit to start and continue the process of renewal in human beings in congregations.
• The fulfilment of the will of God depended on the coming of Christ to earth, his life on earth and his victory over evil. His salvation means deliverance from the power of evil, but also the deliverance of human beings from their own corruptness.

• For human beings to reach the goal that God has in store for them, God’s eternal plan starts with the certainty of God’s grace in Christ and the seal of the Holy Spirit. Human beings should cast off their old self, renew their spirit and thoughts and should continuously put on the armour of God so that they may withstand the evil powers through God’s strength. To achieve this, they must allow themselves to be filled by the Holy Spirit to grow towards maturity in faith and holiness.

• The church fulfils an important role in the execution of God’s eternal plan. The church forms part of the Triune God and this unity should be preserved. Unity in the church grows when believers are equipped with the special gifts that Christ bestows on his body, so that everyone can fulfil his function with the goal to edify and mature.

• When believers, who constitute the church, are equipped, the services they give and receive make them steadfast in their struggle against heresy.

• The grace (blessings) that God bestows on believers can be described as a calling. A life that is worthy of the calling of believers is a life that flows forth from an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ. The knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and of what He did as Head of his body determines the words and actions of those who believe in Him.

• The change that a new life brings forth is visible in the actions of believers. This change motivates believers and influences the decisions they make. This change is clearly visible in their relations with other people and in their moral life.

• The life of the church is governed by gratefulness for the blessings of God, and this gratefulness leads to the praise of God. The church and all believers know that they were regenerated in order to praise the glory of God’s grace. They should not only do certain things, but they should also become what they are in Christ, a person like Christ. They are not anymore without God – they should increasingly change to praise God and glorify Him.
- All of the above serves as an illustration of the church as the vehicle through which God displays His wisdom to the world. The church is called to believe in Him and to be united as the body of Christ.

After these deductions have been made, it can be said that the Ephesian letter contains material that is suitable for an investigation into pastoral ministry – God’s eternal plan for the salvation, change and growth of believers to achieve inner harmony and their relationships with others are described here.

In the next section of this chapter, the place and function of 3:1–4:16 are investigated to determine the place and meaning of the διάκον words used in 3:10 and 4:16.

### 2.4 The meaning of the διάκον words in Ephesians 3:10 and 4:16 for the ministry of congregations

#### 2.4.1 The place and function of 3:1–4:16

The comparative structure of Ephesians based on the research results provided above will now be discussed (see Figure 4: Comparative structure of Ephesians, p. 28). The letter starts by describing God’s eternal plan with all things (1:1–23). The work of the Father (1:3–6, 12, 16–23), the Son (1:7–13) and the Holy Spirit (1:13–14, 17–18) is described. God has chosen the believers and blessed them so that they can be saved by Christ and they are God’s inheritance (López 2011:449). This eternal plan will be accomplished by bringing all things in harmony (again) under Christ, who was raised from the dead and who now sits in the heavenly places as the conqueror over all powers (George, 2009:399). He reigns over everything as Head of the church (1:20–23). This was and is done through the immeasurable greatness of the Father’s ‘power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might’ (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ). Believers receive an inheritance of God when they believe the Word (1:11). Paul prays that they would be able to understand the full measure of this inheritance (1:15–19; Floor 2011:467–477).
Figure 4: Comparative structure of Ephesians

In Ephesians 3, Paul prays for the readers (3:1), but he interrupts himself by describing his position as apostle in the eternal plan (τὴν οἰκονομίαν; 3:2) of God (3:2–8), as well as the place of a congregation (3:9–13) in God’s plan. From verse
14, Paul tells the readers about his prayer for them. The chapter closes with praises to God the Father, who is able to do abundantly more than all we can ever ask for or think about, according to the power at work within us (Sherwood 2012:98). Ephesians 3 and Ephesians 1 are linked. Both describe the eternal plan of God and the place of the church in this plan (Greg 1994:535). In Ephesians 2, the position of the readers before they believed the Word is described (2:1–3), followed by a description of the radical new position (indicated by the words ὁ δὲ) of individual believers in Christ (2:4–10; Talbert 2007:107). The readers are called upon to remember their position before they have become part of the covenant of God (2:11–12; Rudolph 2007:64).

Their radical new position (indicated by the words νυνὶ δὲ) as beneficiaries of the covenant is described in 2:13–20, and the future growth of believers as a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit is described in 2:21, 22. This chapter serves as a description of the grace of God in the lives of people who are freed from the power of the evil one. Greg (1994:164) points out that the hope of their calling (1:18a) is developed further in 2:1–10 and the riches of their glorious inheritance in the saints (1:18b) are developed further in 2:13–20.

In Ephesians 4–6, the new walk (life) of believers is described. This new life is built on the indicative described in chapters 1–3. The particle οὖν is used at the beginning of this section to indicate that the imperatives (‘they are called upon to do’ – παρακαλέω) used in this section flow from the indicative recorded in the previous chapters (Breed 2015a:13; Greg 1994:163. Ephesians 4–6 describes various aspects of the life of people who have been made new by God and are now living as conquerors in Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. The section concludes with 6:10–17, which describes the way the church can live as a conqueror by being strong in the Lord and in the strength of God’s might (ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ) (6:10). The way of the church is described by a metaphor: a war or wrestling (πάλη) between those who are part of the family of God (ἀδελφοί μου) and evil spiritual forces (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας; Wilder 2010:191). From the description of

13 Greg (1994:163) highlights the similarity in the use of the word περιπατέω in chapter 2 and in chapters 4–6. The word περιπατέω occurs in the opening (2:2) and in the closing (2:10) of the first part of chapter 2.
Talbert (2007:107), the unity between chapters 2 and 4 is depicted in the following section.

Chapter 2 describes God’s eternal plan of delivering people from the power of the forces of darkness and is linked with chapter 4. Chapter 4 describes the new way of life of people who have been freed from the power of darkness.

Rudolph (2007) indicates various words that confirm the link between chapters 4 and 2:

For the link with 2:14–18, see e.g., εἰρήνη (4:3; cf. 2:14, 15, 17 bis); εἶς (9x in 4:1–16; cf., 2:14, 15, 16, 18); σώμα (4:4, 12, 16 bis; cf., 2:16). For the link with 2:11–22, see e.g., αὔξάνω, αὔξησις (4:15, 16; cf., 2:21), and εἰς οἴκοδομή, συνοικοδομέω (4:12, 16; cf., 2:21, 22) and συναρμολογέω (4:16; cf., 2:21).

(p. 72, n 128)

2.4.2 Place and structure of Ephesians 3

The διακον word group appears twice in 3:1–4:16. To understand the meaning of the words used here, it is necessary to determine the place and structure of this unit.

Van Aarde (2015:99) motivates a chiastic construction from the vocabulary used in Ephesians 2–5, in which 3:1–21 has a central role as shown in Figure 5: Chiastic construction in Ephesians 2–6.

![Figure 5: Chiastic construction in Ephesians 2–6](image)

The A–A part of the chiastic construction deals with salvation, and the B–B part with the unity of the church, both alternating between the indicatives and imperatives (cf.
also Rudolph 2007:72). The eternal plan of God and the role of Paul and the church are at the focal point in the chiastic construction. In addition, Van Aarde (2014:99) demonstrates the chiastic structure by the relationship of the words between corresponding parts.

It is important to highlight the central place of Ephesians 3 in this construction and the central place of Paul’s δiακονία in Ephesians 3. Greg (1994:185) deduces from a structural analysis that Paul’s role as minister of Christ regarding the Gentiles appears at the beginning (3:1–2), in the centre (3:6–8) and the end (3:13) of 3:1–13 in a chiastic fashion saying, ‘The whole period revolves around the theme of Paul’s role as minister to the Gentiles’. From a structure adapted from Greg (1994:184,185) (see Figure 6: Paul’s role as minister of Christ, according to Ephesians), it can be deduced that Paul's ministry is the focal point in this passage. It is confirmed when the meaning of 3:7 is investigated one by one (see 2.4.3, p. 33).

Figure 6: Paul’s role as minister of Christ, according to Ephesians

Van Aarde (2014:169) makes a distinction between two thought blocks in Ephesians 3 (see Table 2: Two thought blocks in Ephesians 3, p. 32). As can be seen from the table, Van Aarde (2014:169) also highlights a threefold division in 3:1–13:

- ‘The stewardship of the gospel committed to the Church: Ephesians 3:8–13.’

From these structures, it can be deduced that Paul hands his διακονία over to the church.
Table 2: Two thought blocks in Ephesians 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First thought block (3:1–3:8)</th>
<th>Second thought block (3:9–13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The οἰκονομία was given to Paul (A1) as a ministry (διακονία) (A2).</td>
<td>a) The οἰκονομία was made known (given) to the church (a1) to make it known to all (a2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The μυστήριον was revealed to Paul through a revelation by God.</td>
<td>b) The (οἰκονομία τοῦ) μυστηρίου was made known to the church by Paul's writings (c1) and preaching (c2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Paul’s task: to make known the μυστήριον (C1), and to preach to the Gentiles (C2).</td>
<td>c) The task of the church: to make known the μυστήριον to all authorities and powers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. The μυστήριον was never known before.</td>
<td>d) The μυστήριον was never known before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. The contents of the μυστήριον: In Christ, Gentiles also receive God’s promises.</td>
<td>e) The contents of the μυστήριον: God’s diversified (multi-faceted) wisdom in Christ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that chapter 3 concludes with a prayer. The church should understand the depth of Christ’s love; therefore, this chapter concludes, as in chapter 1, that God works with the power of love in his church. Love and power can be directly linked to what is said in 4:1–16 (Rudolph 2007:72). In 4:1–16, it is described how the church should fulfil their calling by living the love and power of God.

2.4.2.1 Summary

If this structure is accepted, it shows that Paul views his task as διάκονος as a stewardship received from God. The fact that his ministry reveals a mystery from God via preaching and writing can be viewed as unique and this uniqueness equips the church to become part of this ministry (Floor 2011:469–470). The ministry of Paul and the church are both part of God’s eternal plan. The uniqueness of the church’s ministry reveals the wisdom of God to all powers (Wilder 2010:194). The church can only fulfil its calling when it understands the love of Christ and the power with which God can work through them.

A detailed analysis of 3:7 follows in the next section.
2.4.3 The meaning of διάκονος in Ephesians 3:7

Ephesians 3:7 is discussed according to its narrative structure as represented in Figure 7: Narrative structure of Ephesians 3:7. A translation in line with this structure could be, ‘Of which (the gospel) I was made (aorist passive) a servant because of the gift from God’s grace that was given to me through the working of his power.’

3:7a οὗ: The sentence starts with the word οὗ, which refers back to τοῦ εὐαγγελίου in the previous verse. In the previous verses, the content of this gospel is described and called a mystery that was revealed to Paul, the other apostles and prophets (Lincoln 1990:128). This mystery has not been known previously. Paul says that this gospel has been revealed to him by the Spirit (Pester 2009:32).

3:7b ἐγενόμην διάκονος: Paul says that he became or was made a διάκονος of this gospel. This has not been always his calling. In the beginning, he persecuted the followers of Christ (Phil. 3:6) and Christ revealed to him the truth about this gospel (Gal. 1:12). Paul’s calling refers to 1:1 where he is called ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ

Ephesians 3:7:

οὗ ἐγενόμην διάκονος

κατὰ τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ (subjective genitive)

tῆν δοθεισάν μοι

κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ

Figure 7: Narrative structure of Ephesians 3:7

The contents of this gospel is ‘... that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel’ (3:6). This description refers back to chapter 2 where an explanation is given on how the readers as Gentiles became part of the people of God and how they shared in the promises (2:13–22) (Mbennah 2009:49).
Χριστοῦ διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ (‘an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God’). Comments will be made on the meaning of διάκονος after the whole verse has been investigated.

3:7c κατὰ τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι: Balz and Schneider (1990:253) state, ‘Κατά with the gen. originally designates the point of origin or the goal of an action’. Louw and Nida (1989:131) provide 18 possibilities within the range of meanings for this word, which occurs in the New Testament in fourteen different domains. They are of the opinion that κατά can serve as ‘a marker of a relation involving similarity of process—“in accordance with, in relation to’” (Louw & Nida 1989:777). Κατά can also carry the meaning of ‘as a result of, Mt 27:19’ (Anon., 2011). In this context, Κατά can therefore be translated with ‘according to’.

The gift of being a διάκονος of the gospel was given to Paul by God’s grace. In this way, both τῆς χάριτος and τοῦ Θεοῦ can be viewed as subjective genitives. The way Paul received the δωρεὰν is expressed by the functionally equivalent terms δίδωμι (3:2b) and γνωρίζω (3:3a), as well as by αποκαλύπτω (3:3a; Sherwood 2012:103) and this flows from God’s grace.

When compared to other parts of Scripture, we find that ‘grace’, ‘gift’ and ‘service’ are used together quite frequently (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 3:5–10; 1 Cor. 12:4–6). Service is a gift of God by his grace whereby his grace is served by the διάκονος to others. It corresponds also with 4:7, 12 where, amongst others, the apostles are described as instruments through which the saints are equipped to serve the grace they received from Christ. ‘Paul’s role, then, is his administration or stewardship of that χάρις, as described by the occurrence of οίκονομιαν in vs. 2’ (vs. 2 = 3:2) (Sherwood 2012:103).

The διακονία, which Paul received, is further described in 3:8, 9:

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14 τῆς χάριτος can also be read as an objective genitive. Then it would mean that Paul became a διάκονος because of God’s grace as a gift. In Ephesians, the word ‘grace’ is used 12 times (1:2; 1:6–7; 2:5; 2:7–8; 3:2; 3:7–8; 4:7; 4:29; 6:24). Sometimes it can be understood as a gift and other times as the subject. In this Chapter, it is not really necessary to decide which one is applicable. However, it is important to be aware of the close relationship between διακονία and grace and the importance of the power of God.
To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the fellowship of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

The words τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (3:8) refer to 1:7, 1:18 and 3:16. Paul’s task is to make known what cannot fully be known – it has been a mystery for ages and is now revealed, but even now, it is not fully comprehensible (Barth 1984:343–344). The incomprehensibility of God’s grace in Christ is also referred to in 3:19, 20 (Wilder 2010:188, 189). Because he knows this, Paul prays for the saints,

... that according to the riches of his glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (3:16–19).

The words τίς ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου (3:9) refer to 3:2, 1:10 and 3:11. Paul’s ministry makes him part of God’s eternal plan and he explains to his readers their role in this plan (Floor 2011:471–472). The way they came to understand the gospel is described in 2:1–10. Ephesians 2:1–10 and 3:16–19 both describe the beginning and progress of the same process. This process refers to the growth in comprehension of the mystery that was revealed to them by the ministry of Paul and others (Pester 2009:30–32).

The result of Paul’s ministry is described in 3:10, which states, ‘... so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.’ God made Paul a part of his eternal plan. God revealed his plan to Paul and gave him the gift to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (his διακονία), through which God brought the Gentiles to faith (Sherwood 2012:105, 106). By faith, the Gentiles became part of the people of God (2:11–22). They grew in their comprehension of the mercy of God (1:17–19; 2:20–22; 3:16–19) that they had received in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Because of the growing comprehension, while building their lives on this knowledge, the church made the manifold wisdom of God known (3:10). This is ‘according to the eternal purpose that
He (the Father) has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord (3:11). This purpose of God with the church is described in 2:10 (Barth 1984:345, 250–251), where Paul says, ‘For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.’

Paul’s διακονία as part of the eternal plan of God is put to practice by proclaiming the gospel, and has as purpose a church that will reveal the wisdom of God by the way they live (walk in good works).

3:7d: κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ:

The grace experienced by Paul in his ministry flowed out of the mighty power of God … this phrase qualifies δοθείσης rather than being coordinate with the previous κατὰ clause and in direct relationship with ἐγενήθην διάκονος (Lincoln 1990:182).

The gift was given to Paul through the working of God’s power. This sentence can also mean that Paul performed his ministry by the powerful working of God’s might (cf. 6:10). Greg (1994:182) argues convincingly that 3:1–13 develops the theme of ‘the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe’. This theme has already been addressed in 1:19. Greg points out that the pattern that is started in 2:1–10 (developing the theme ‘hope of your calling’ – 1:18a) and 2:11–22 (developing the theme ‘riches of your inheritance’ – 1:18b) is continued in the development of the power theme (1:19). The power motif recurs in the prayer report (3:14–21), according to Greg (1994):

In other words, the thanksgiving prayer report of 1:15–23 introduces the power theme; the prayer report of 3:14–21 summarizes it. One can reasonably assume its development somewhere in between. Ephesians 3:1–13 offers itself as the most likely spot since this is the only place between the two where explicit power terminology occurs with reference to God’s work in ‘us who believe’ (3:7, 4). (p. 183).

The repeated emphasis on the power of God that works in the children of God and in the church as a community is of the utmost importance (Rudolph 2007:130). In 1:19, Paul prays that they should know ‘what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might’ (καὶ Τί Τὸ
ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ). This very power raised Jesus from death and made Him Lord over everything (1:20, 21). The combination of the words δύναμις and ἐνεργεῖω/ ἐνέργεια is used three times in chapters 1–3 to describe God’s work in and through the believers (1:19; 3:7; 3:20). In other New Testament letters, ἐνεργεῖω is used frequently to describe God’s work in and through the believers (1 Cor. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:11; 2 Cor. 4:12; Gal. 5:5–6 (2 times); Eph. 1:11; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess. 2:13). Ἐνέργεια is used in 1:19, 3:7, 4:16, Philippians 3:21, Colossians 1:29, 2 Thessalonians 2:9 and ἐνέργημα is used in 1 Colossians 12:6, 10. In each case, it is used to describe the work of God or another force and not the work of human beings. This power of God is closely linked to the enthronement of Jesus (Bayes 2013:75, 76).

Paul knew that his ministry was empowered by God’s might, it is God who made his ministry effective (Wilder 2010:192). From another angle, it can be stated that God exercised his power through the ministry of Paul. The same was true for the church who took the ministry of Paul forward (Rudolph 2007:70). To fulfill the task, the church needed the power of God or they would have lost hope, because they saw the suffering Paul experienced and sensed they might also experience suffering (3:13; Rudolph 2007:8).

Paul stresses, therefore, in 3:12 that ‘we’ (the church) have been blessed by boldness and have access to God through faith in Him (3:12). Paul prays for his readers so that the Holy Spirit may strengthen them in their inner being with his power (3:16) in order to know all of the dimensions of Christ’s love for his people (Wilder 2010:195). He stresses that the strengthening and obtaining of the knowledge will happen ‘with all the saints’ (3:18; Vorster 2014:69). When Paul points to the ultimate goal of all of this – the purpose of the eternal plan of God – the church is the place where God is glorified (3:20, 21). In light of these verses (3:20, 21), it becomes clear that in chapter 1, ‘we’ is the church that should glorify the greatness of God’s grace. Through the church, who knows the mystery of the gospel and, therefore, all the dimensions of Christ’s love, God is able to do far more than the church can imagine due to his power that works in them (3:20). God’s eternal plan moves from the work of the Triune God without the participation of human beings.
(except Christ) to his work through Paul as his apostle to his work in and through the church. The church is described as the final outlet and display of God’s grace and is the final instrument through which God will complete his plan. Therefore, the readers are called the fullness of Christ (1:23).

2.4.3.1 Summary
Paul’s διακονία is described in Ephesians 3. The character of his διακονία can be described as follows:

- It is a gift from God.
- It is a stewardship of the grace of God.
- The content focuses on the mystery, the grace and the gospel of God.
- The focal point is the Gentiles.
- Preaching, writing, explaining and bringing people to knowledge about the mystery are the methods used.
- It comes from the power (energy) of God and has the purpose of unleashing this power in the church.
- Through Paul’s διακονία – in faithfulness as steward appointed by God by his grace – the power of God brought Gentiles to faith.
- The fruit of Paul’s διακονία is:
  - Establishing the church to make the wisdom of God known.
  - Leading the church in boldness to Christ even in the midst of suffering.
  - Nurturing the church in the knowledge of Christ’s love and to enjoy communion with Him.
  - Experiencing the power of God working in and through the church.
  - Experiencing the glory of God in the church.
- Paul’s ministry was, therefore, a foundational ministry through which God established his church, according to his eternal plan.
- It is a διακονία dependent on God made clear by frequent praying.
- Paul’s διακονία (and that of the other apostles) is the instrument through which God established the foundation for the executing of his plan through the church.
- God works mightily through the διακονία of his called stewards.
2.4.4 Ephesians 4:1–16

2.4.4.1 Place and structure of Ephesians 4:1–16

Mbennah (2009:37) views 4:1–16 as one of the three distinctive parts of Ephesians and regards it as a bridge between chapters 1–3 and 4:17–6:20. Moreover, he states (p. 46) that 1–3 describes the new identity of the Gentile Christians. They are guided to understand their new identity in Christ and to celebrate their radical change. In 4:17–6:20, Paul exhorts the readers to live (walk) according to their new identity. However, in what way does 4:1–16 connect these two parts? O’Brien (1999:18) maintains, ‘The discussion of the church in Ephesians 4:7–16 picks up the theological argument of the first half of the letter and provides the background for the second half’.

Jordaan (1990:61) indicates the unique place of 4:1–16 when he identifies this pericope as an indicative island in this section of the letter where mainly paracleses are found (Breed 2015a:5). It is also clear that 4:1–16 forms part of 4–6, according to Hoehner’s structure (2002:vii, 62, 66–69; cf. also Fowl 2012:125–214) based on the use of οὖν and περιπατέω (see structure above). It has also been indicated that it is closely linked to chapter 2. It is shown here that this pericope can be linked to other parts of the letter, which confirms its central position. However, it is firstly linked to chapter 3. In 3:9–11, Paul links the outcome of his διακονία to the eternal plan of God as discussed in the previous part of the letter (1:1–3:8). The outcome of this eternal plan – through the work of Paul – is that God, the creator of all things, would become known to all (3:9), including the authorities in the heavens, and that the wisdom of God would shine through the church (3:10). For this reason, Paul prays that the church should know the scope of Christ’s love through the strength of the Holy Spirit (3:16, 18). He concludes with the wish that God should be praised, as He can do far more than the church can ever imagine through the power that is working in the church. The οὖν in 4:1 not only has a link to chapters 4–6 and chapters 1–3, but also links 3:9–21 with 4:1–16. The themes of the calling of the church – unity, love, the Trinity – are introduced in 3:9–21 and are included in 4:1–16. In 4:1–16, it is described how the church should make the wisdom of God known to all, namely that they should use the grace that is given to them by the exalted Lord Jesus Christ. If
this analysis is accepted, three parts can be distinguished in 4:1–16 (Payne 2008:210–212):

- The calling of the believers with emphasis on conserving the unity.
- The gifts of Christ to his body.
- Love as the determining factor when the body of Christ is augmented.

These three parts are investigated in the following section to determine the meaning of the διάκονος word group in 4:12. Lincoln (1990) summarises this passage as follows:

To each individual who belongs to the Church Christ has given grace in various proportions. This notion of giving sets the direction for the rest of the passage, at first it is supported by Scripture, next the identity of the giver is underlined, and then the nature and purposes of the gifts are set out. (p. 265)

Lincoln sees the unity of the passage in the grace given freely by God. O’Brien (1999) states:

The goal of Christ’s exaltation to the place of highest supremacy is ‘that he might fill all things’. This final clause corresponds to 1:23, ‘the fullness of him who fills everything in every way,’ where the verb ‘fill’ signifies to ‘control by exercise of sovereignty’. Christ fills the universe, not in some semi-physical sense, but by his mighty rule over all things ... a notion that is paralleled in the Old Testament where filling the universe, in this sense of exercising sovereign rule, is predicated of God: ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD’ (Jer. 23:24). Here the idea is transferred to Christ: he fills the universe through the exercise of his lordship over everything. This entails his functioning as the powerful ruler over the principalities (1:21), and giving grace and strength to his people (4:13, 15–16), through whom he fulfils his purposes. Christ now sets out to accomplish the goal of filling all things by supplying his people with everything necessary to foster the growth and perfection of the body (v. 13). Having achieved dominion over all the powers through his victorious ascent, he sovereignly distributes gifts to the members of his body. The building of the body is inextricably linked with his intention of filling the universe with his rule, since the church is his instrument in carrying out his purposes for the cosmos. (p. 296–297)

Rudolph (2007) outlines the role of love in 4:1–16 as follows:
Tracing this particular cohesive thread through this section illustrates the point. As the Ephesians ‘bear with one another in love’ (4:2), a requirement before anything can be accomplished within the body, and ‘speak the truth in love’ (4:15), a necessary corrective step, they will ‘cause the growth of the body for the building of itself in love’ (4:16), the final culminating point of the section. (p. 72)

The structure of Ephesians 4:1 can be represented as in Figure 8: An analysis of Ephesians 4:1–16 reworked from Van Aarde (2014:206–209).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calling</th>
<th>Calling; serve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:1b</td>
<td>The calling to which you have been called</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:4b</td>
<td>Called to the one hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:2, 3</td>
<td>Serve each other in humility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One</th>
<th>Unity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:3</td>
<td>The unity of the Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:4a</td>
<td>One body, one Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:4b</td>
<td>One calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>One Lord, one faith, one baptism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:6</td>
<td>One God and Father of all – many/all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:6</td>
<td>The Father, who is over all and through all and in all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gifts and grace</th>
<th>Gifts, growth and unity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:7a</td>
<td>Christ has grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:7b</td>
<td>The measure of Christ's gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:8-10</td>
<td>Gifts from Him who descended and ascended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>Equipping/Word gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:12</td>
<td>Purpose of equipping gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:12-14</td>
<td>Outcome of equipping – one in Christ, full-grown.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love</th>
<th>Truth and love; growth and unity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:15</td>
<td>Speaking truth in love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15</td>
<td>Grow to Him, the Head, in all things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:16a</td>
<td>From Him the whole body brings about growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:16b</td>
<td>The contribution of the ligaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:16c</td>
<td>Function of every member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:16d</td>
<td>Building-up in love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8: An analysis of Ephesians 4:1–16 reworked from Van Aarde (2014:206–209)
2.4.4.2 The use of διακονία in 4:12 within the context of the epistle

The meaning of words can be traced lexicographically to determine various possibilities, but the context within the document, chapter, pericope and sentence should help to determine the precise meaning of words. Ephesians 4:1–6, 7–14 and 4:15, 16 are discussed in their relationship to 4:11, 12 to determine the impact on the way the διάκονο- word group in 4:11, 12 should be understood. The question is, given the context, what potential meaning the writer and readers had in mind when verses 11 and 12 were written or read.

2.4.4.2.1 Relationship of 4:11, 12 (διακονία) to 4:1–6

The narrative structure of 4:1–6 is presented in Figure 9: The narrative structure of Ephesians 4:1–6.

Figure 9: The narrative structure of Ephesians 4:1–6

The two main subjects addressed in 4:1–6 are the calling (τῆς κλήσεως ἢς ἐκλήθητε) of the believers and their unity. This calling can and does refer back to

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15 See Mbennah (2009:60) and Kruger (2005:537–539) for a detailed discussion of the relationship between the three clauses in 4:12. See Collins (1990:233, 234; 1995:174) for an alternative view on the translation of this verse – the ministry is only done via special gifts and not by the saints.
chapters 1–3 and specific verses in these chapters. Chapter 1 is a description of the eternal plan of God and the part that each member of the Trinity fulfils to bring this plan to completion. The outcome of this plan is the unity of all things under the headship of Jesus Christ. Paul’s prayer is that the believers should know the hope of their calling (1:18; Floor 2011:473). In 4:1–6, the readers are called to maintain this unity, which is grounded in the Trinity, but also in the means (faith) and symbol (baptism) through which believers share in the grace of God (1:6) (Smith 2010:288).

The theme of unity is again repeated when Christ is called the Head of the church and the church is explained as the body of Christ (Son 2009:24, 25). The church is also described as the fullness of Christ. In chapter 2, the redemption that the Gentiles receive culminates in the oneness that is described by images, such as ‘household of God’ (2:19), ‘holy temple in the Lord’ (2:21) and ‘dwelling place for God by the Spirit’ (2:22). In chapter 3, the subject of unity is not addressed directly but emphasis is placed on the fact that the church as a whole makes the wisdom of God known (3:10), the love of Christ is known by all of the saints (3:18) and God should receive all of the glory in the church (3:21). Unity and growth towards maturity are once again emphasised. The calling of the church is described in 3:10 as the instrument of God through which He displays his manifold wisdom. Ephesians 3 concludes with what chapter 1 starts with, namely the work of the Triune God, which is realising his eternal plan in the church (3:9–21).

The διακονία of the saints contributes to the growing unity of the church and to the maturity of believers in Christ (4:15). It can be maintained, therefore, that the διακονία of the saints is the way the saints live up to their calling to establish unity and maturity. Unity and maturity are rooted in the unity within the Trinity and flow from the work of the Trinity in the eternal plan of God (George 2009:404). The διακονία of the saints has, therefore, a significant role to play in fulfilling God’s plan to unite all things in Christ (Floor 2011:476–477). The link with chapter 2 indicates that the διακονία is also focused on the integration of people from outside the church.

Rudolph’s (2007) description summarises the focus on unity and love in 4:1–16:

Unity (ἐνότητα), found only in this section (4:3, 13), εἰς (9x of 15 total), σῶμα (4x of 9 total) and the introduction of ἀλλήλων (elsewhere in 4:25, 32; 5:21)
each point to unity as the topic of the section. Several words link this section to 2:11–22, and especially to 2:14–18, where the concept of unity, if not the word itself, was first introduced. Finally, this concept is further supported by ἐν ἀγάπῃ (4:2, 15, 16), a requirement for unity, and the συν-compound words (4:3, συνδέσμῳ, 4:16, συναρμολογούμενον, συμβιβαζόμενον) a mark of unity, thus setting the limits of this section with an inclusion. (p. 72)

2.4.4.2.2 Relationship between 4:11, 12 (διακονία) and 4:7–14 (Διακονία and grace)

In chapter 4, διακονία is linked to grace and gifts (4:7). Payne (2008:211) points out the threefold use of the verb (δίδωμι; 4:7, 8, 11) and is of the opinion that gifts are the primary focus in this passage. However, Christ also extends grace. Therefore, gifts and grace, and Christ as the giver, are emphasised in this passage, but also the receivers of these gifts and grace and their purpose (George 2009:400).

According to Whitlark (2011:35–57), grace also plays an important role in chapters 1–3. The letter starts with an emphasis on God’s blessing of the believers and their acknowledgement of his blessedness (εὐλογήτος, εὐλογέω; 1:3). God blesses us ‘in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places’ and this blessing should be to praise his glorious grace with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. Knowledge of God’s grace comes to the believers in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (1:17, 18). The readers were saved, because God is rich in mercy and He saved them by his grace (2:4, 5). This grace led them to do good works, ‘For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them’ (2:10). God did this ‘so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus’ (2:7). Paul’s ministry is often described as a stewardship of God’s grace to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and its purpose is ‘that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places’ (3:10). This stewardship is linked to the description of the purpose of the special gifts mentioned in chapter 4. The gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers are given by Christ to equip the saints for the work of ministry. By equipping them, the body of Christ is transformed. The goal is, therefore, that congregations should ‘attain to the unity of the faith and of the
knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ (Mbennah 2009:63). As this goal is reached more and more, congregations will ‘no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes’ (4:14). Rather, speaking the truth in love, they will ‘grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ’ (4:15).

The picture painted in Ephesians is one of a congregation that is blessed by God in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit by all of the blessings found in heavenly places (1:3). They were saved from the rule of the devil and their own desires by being made alive by the Spirit and united to Christ and his body by faith (2:1–10). The purpose of this new life is that they should be restored as individuals within the body/temple of God, where the Holy Spirit lives and works, so that the richness of God’s grace in Christ can be visible in the church for all to see (2:19–22; 3:10). God realised this through the διακονία of Paul that taught the readers the mystery of the gospel. Christ – the resurrected and exalted Lord, the conqueror of Satan and his co-workers – equips his body with the gifts of the Spirit (4:1–6; Gombis 2005:367–380). Everyone in the church receives grace and grace-giving gifts, but He gave some, like the apostles, initiating gifts and others, like the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, gifts to equip the saints for their work (ἐργον) of ministry.16

The work (ἐργον) of ministry is already described in 2:10, where it is said the readers are created by God in Christ to perform good works (ἐργον) so that they can walk (περιπατέω)17 in the good works (as described in 4–6). Grace is, therefore, a gift of divine enablement (Whitlark 2011:35–57).

Consequently, it can be stated that the διακονία of the saints is the final outlet of God’s grace to the body of Christ and to the world.

2.4.4.2.3 Relationship between 4:11, 12 (διακονία) and 4:15, 16 (love)

Ephesians 4:15, 16 are closely linked to 4:7–14, because in both these passages the work of the ministry of the saints is described. However, the emphasis is on love and

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17 The word περιπατέω is used to structure chapters 4–6, where the calling of the believers is in answer to God’s grace.
truth in 4:15, 16 (as can be seen in the analysis above). Again, it is necessary to go back to Ephesians 1–3 to understand the full meaning of what is meant by ‘love’ in these verses. The ἀγάπη word group is used seven times¹⁸ in Ephesians 1–3. In 1:4, 5 (KJV) the goal of God’s election of the saints is that they ‘should be holy and without blame before him in love’. It can also be interpreted that God predestined the believers in love for adoption in Christ (ESV). This interpretation corresponds with 2:4, 5, where it is said that God made the believers alive in Christ because of his great love for them. The KJV interpretation corresponds with 4:1 and 5:1, where the believers are called upon to walk in love. Believers receive God’s grace, which flows from his love for them, and God’s love changes believers to love each other and other people. This is confirmed in 3:17, 19. In 3:10, the outcome of Paul’s ministry in proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles, according to God’s eternal plan, is described (Pester 1999:36). The outcome is ‘that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places’ (ASV). Paul asks the congregation to view his suffering as a part of God’s eternal plan and that the church should have boldness and access to God in Christ (3:10–13); thus, they should not lose heart because of his suffering. In 3:14, Paul starts with the words Τούτου χάριν (‘for this reason’) and gives the reason for the content of his prayer. The church should make the manifold wisdom of God known! Due to their boldness in and access to Christ, he prays the prayer contained in 3:16–19. He prays that the Holy Spirit should strengthen the readers in their inner being so that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith. Furthermore, when they are grounded and rooted in love, they will have the strength to comprehend, with all of the saints, the breadth and length and height and depth of God’s love for them ‘and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge’ (ASV) and that they may be filled with the fullness of God (3:17–19).

In 4:13, 14, it is said that the result of equipping the saints is that they will be steadfast against deceptions and will grow towards maturity ‘to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ (ASV) (4:13). In 3:17–19, the knowledge of Christ’s love and being grounded and rooted in his love brings steadfastness, the dwelling of Christ in their hearts and the fullness of God. It is therefore clear that this knowledge

¹⁸ Eph. 1:4, 6, 15; 2:4 (twice); 3:17, 19.
and living in God’s love play a crucial role in the growth to maturity of believers (Smith 2010:291).

Love forms an inclusion in 4:15, 16 and all that is described in this inclusion, is characterised by love. In verse 15, ‘speaking the truth’ is in contrast with the deceitfulness of false doctrine (4:14). Speaking truth in love enhances growth towards Christ as Head of the body (George 2009:404). In 4:17–21, the topic of truth is expanded with regard to misleading those who do not know Christ. Truth is described as the truth that forms part of Jesus – the way they learn about Christ (cf. 3:17–19; Smith 2010:291) should determine their way of living (4:20, 21; Payne 2008:210, 215). Dogterom (2003:10) identifies this as ‘the experiential knowing of Christ.’ It can, therefore, be stated that the phrase ‘speaking truth in love’ is describing a way of living according to your knowledge of Jesus Christ and refers back to Paul’s prayer that the readers should know the love of Christ (3:18, 19).

From the above-mentioned discussion, it can be deduced that the διακονία of the saints is closely linked to love. When the saints use their gifts, they serve others with the grace and love of Christ.

Because both 4:7–14 and 4:16 describe the work of the different members of the congregation, the exegesis of 4:16 is necessary to understand the διακονία of the believers fully.

The narratological structure of 4:16 is presented in Figure 10: Narratological structure of Ephesians 4:16 (p. 48). ἐξ οὗ refers back to Christ in verse 15. If the structure is accepted, the following translation of this verse is relevant: ‘from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies towards the working of the measure of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the edification of itself in love.
πάν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον: What is happening all the time in the whole body is described by two present circumstantial participles.\textsuperscript{19} According to Louw and Nida (1989:612), the verb συναρμολογέω can mean ‘to fit together in a coherent and compatible manner’, ‘to be joined together’ or ‘to fit together’. In 2:21, it is said that to fit together is a part of the growth in Christ – building a holy temple in the Lord. Payne (2008:216) views this as the work of Christ – He puts the body together. Van Aarde (2014:328) maintains that both verbs refer to the work of the ligaments (ἁφῆς) and describe the structure of the church: ‘This internal growth depends on good structural organization, as suggested by Paul in Ephesians 4:16’ (see also Bales 2002:61; Suh 2006:62). In view of the similarity between 2:12 and 4:16, the subject of συναρμολογούμενον should rather be seen as God the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit. This is confirmed in other verses as well. In 1:10, 17, the Father is the subject of uniting all things in Christ. In 2:13–22, the Father, Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit are responsible for uniting the body and temple. In 4:3, the congregation is called upon to ‘maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ The Spirit is responsible for unity; the congregation should maintain it. Furthermore, in 4:5, 6, the believers are united in the Lord and Father (George 2009:405).

\textsuperscript{19} Circumstantial participle: ‘Use of a participle to express the conditions, or circumstances, under which either an action occurs or a substantive exists in the relevant clause’ (Lukaszewski 2007).
The verb συμβιβαζόμενον, according to Louw and Nida (1989:614), can have the meaning ‘to bring together into a unit’, ‘to bring together’, ‘to cause to be a unit’, ‘to unite’ and/or ‘to combine’. The subject of the verb is ἁφῆς (Versteeg 1985:24; Lincoln 1990:262). ἁφῆς refers to the special gifts that were given for equipping the body. According to Louw and Nida (1989:614), ἁφῆς refers to a ‘part of the body which binds the different parts together – ligament’. ‘The equipment that they provide binds the body together so that the different parts can function effectively with each individual part’ (Versteeg 1985:24, 25).

The word ἐνέργεια is used three times in Ephesians (1:19; 3:7; 4:16). In 1:19, it describes the mighty power (τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος) with which God works in believers and it is used with the word δύναμις. In 3:7, it is again used with the word δύναμις. Here it describes God’s effective power in Paul when God made Paul a διάκονος ‘according to the gift of God’s grace’ (Lincoln 1990:263). It is, therefore, expected that 4:16 will also describe God’s work in and through believers, especially because the verb ἐνεργέω is used in the rest of Ephesians three out of the four times when God’s effective work is described (1:11, 20; 3:20). In 2:2, the working (ἐνεργέω) of Satan in the children of wrath is described. Clark (1935) compares the different places in the New Testament where the ἐνεργεύω word group is used. He convincingly argues that it is mostly a description of the work of powers outside human beings (God or other powers). When these powers are referred to, it describes God’s activity and brings victory over the evil forces. According to 4:16, the special gifts (ἁφῆς) therefore supply the necessary support for members of the church by equipping them; when they have been equipped, God can work effectively in and through them to build the body (Mbennah 2009:69). Wourms (2007:4) formulates it saying, ‘Personal transformation becomes a catalyst for congregational transformation such that the Body of Christ is built up as each member does its part (4:16; 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:4–8).’ Versteeg (1985:22) is of the opinion that this verse formulates how each member in his own way executes the power of God.
2.5 Conclusion

In Ephesians 1 and 2, the eternal plan of God to bring all things together under one Head, Jesus Christ, is described with regard to the work of the Triune God. The focus is first on the grace and love of God (1:4) for those He had chosen. Chapter 2 ends with the growing unity of the saved ones as a temple of God in Christ the Lord through the indwelling of the Spirit (2:21, 22). Only at the end of Ephesians 2 (2:20), the apostles and the prophets are mentioned as the foundation on which the church is built. The reference to the foundation of the church serves as a transition to what follows.

In 3–4:16, the same eternal plan is described, but now it is made clear how God uses people in his plan. Again (as in chapter 1) this chapter introduces the grace of God (3:2) and emphasises the love of God/Christ through the description of his eternal plan (3:16–19). Paul’s διακονία is described as the way the church is formed. In 4:1–16, it is described how the church is equipped through the διακονία of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers. Through the διακονία of every believer, the church can be built up in Christ. Chapter 3 concludes, as in Chapter 2, with the way the body is built up in love, but now through the διακονία of every member. Διακονία is the way in which the Triune God makes the mystery and wisdom of his grace and love known to the world and He exercises his power by conquering the powers of evil in and through the believers.

In 4:17–6:20, the lives (walk) of the blessed, gifted and equipped saints is described in practice. Ephesians 3:1–4:16 therefore forms the bridge between the description of the work of the Triune God (in 1–2) and the description of the calling of the believers (in 4:17–6:20) to live in accordance with God’s eternal plan as it is realised in Christ.

The place of διακονία in God’s eternal plan is presented in Table 3: The place of διακονία in God’s eternal plan (p. 51). God uses the διακονία of the apostles to call his chosen out of slavery into freedom as a body of Christ (Eph. 3). He uses the διακονία of the special gifts to equip the saints for their διακονία (4:1–16) and He leads the saints by his Spirit to do their διακονία in everyday life as a freed people (4:17–6:20).
Table 3: The place of διακονία in God’s eternal plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ephesians 1,2</th>
<th>Ephesians 3</th>
<th>Ephesians 4:1–16</th>
<th>Ephesians 4:17–6:20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The work of the Triune God fulfilling his eternal plan by redeeming the chosen from evil forces and bringing them together, from all nations, as a temple of the Holy Spirit.</td>
<td>The διακονία of Paul initiating the church among the Gentiles</td>
<td>The διακονία of the saints equipped by the special gifts</td>
<td>The walk of the saints in everyday life, living as conquerors over the evil forces from within themselves and the evil forces from outside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following guidelines can now be formulated for a local congregation in the RCSA in developing a ministry plan:

- The eternal plan of God should form the basis of every ministry plan.
- A ministry plan should focus on the goal to bring all believers together in harmony under Jesus Christ as Head of the church.
- Members should know and understand their place in the eternal plan of God.
- The imperative in preaching, teaching and pastoral care should always be based on a sound knowledge of the indicative work of the Triune God.
- The victory of Christ over all powers and He as Lord should be a determining factor in the way ministry is done in a congregation.
- A major part of God’s eternal plan is to bring people out from under the rule of evil to be renewed in Christ through the work of the Spirit.
  - A congregation should always be missional in all of its ministry work.
  - A congregation should try to make certain during its ministry work that individuals have been regenerated before bringing the imperative of the new life to them.
- A ministry plan should include multi-cultural facets so that the unity in Christ can be experienced far across the borders of race and language.
- The growth of individual members should be the priority of a ministry plan.
- Growth goes hand in hand with renewing minds through the knowledge of Christ.
- Growth with regard to the experiential knowledge of the love of Christ should pervade a ministry plan.
- The unity of a congregation should be founded in the Triune God.
• The gifts that bring the Word to a congregation should equip members intentionally so that they can use the gifts they received from Christ.
• Members should each have a task in a congregation and manage it by their equipping gifts.
• Equipping members for their διακονία should be viewed as the road to growth in order to reach maturity.
• By equipping members for their διακονία and guiding them to fulfil their specific function, they should be prepared to live a life worthy of their calling.
• The knowledge and experience of the work of the Triune God should have a clear impact on the daily life (walk) of a congregation.
• A ministry plan should address practical situations, such as family and marriage life and work relationships.
• A congregation should be equipped to conquer evil spirits through the power of the Lord invested in them.
Chapter 3
The use of the διακον- word group in the two-tiered narrative of the Gospel of John:
To make God visible through διακονία

Synopsis
In this chapter, the Gospel of John will be studied from the viewpoint of the two-tiered narrative in the gospel and the role that the writer appointed to the διακονία of the followers of Jesus Christ in the narrative. The implied readers can be seen as a congregation that needed pointers for their ministry and their walk with Christ. Out of these pointers, churches that view the Bible as the core document of the Christian faith,20 can seek to find principles applicable for the ministry in their congregation today.21

3.1 Introduction
The Gospel of John links the logos with creation (Genesis 1–2; Kolb 2012:11). With the words ἐν αὐτῷ (1:4), John equates the One who came to be the light to people with the word through which all were created (Thompson 2016:278,279). This is also the Word that became flesh in Jesus Christ (Koester 2008:30; Evans 1993:77–79; Brown 2010:275–277; 282–286). John shows that Jesus Christ was the One through whom everything was created (Bruner 2012:14,15). Jesus was the one through whom, in the beginning, light came into the darkness and life came to conquer death (John 1). As He came to make the new creation possible, He came as the light and the life for humankind (Bruner 2012:10–14). He came as the One sent by God (John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 36, 37, 38; 6:57; 7:16,18, 28, 29, 42; 9:4). The whole narrative of the book is driven by the purpose of God to save his children by sending the light to the world (John 3:16; Koester 2008:28; Loader 2016:55). In John 1, the continuity between God’s purpose for creation and his sending the Word is stressed (Brown 2010:276). Koester (2008:28) remarks, ‘Yet God remains hidden, his

20 See Chapter 1 (p. 1) for the meta-theoretical convictions of the researcher.
21 Parts of this chapter have been published in the article, ‘Finding guidelines on social change in the two-tiered narrative and diakonia in the Gospel of John’ (Breed 2015b).
presence elusive,’ and all the things that He did were tied to the One He sent
(Anderson 1999:34). As Williams (2016:79) states, ‘One of the most distinctive
features of the presentation of Jesus in the Gospel of John is the claim that he
reveals the God who cannot otherwise be seen.’

3.2 The ever-present possibility of darkness, blindness and death
(The darkness narrative)

As also described in Genesis, God did not take the possibility of darkness away.
From the start (John 1:5), the assurance is given that the darkness will not overcome
the light, but that does not take the presence of darkness away (Bruner 2012:18).
Darkness in John is darkness of the mind, not seeing the light, not comprehending,
not accepting and not believing (Manzanga 2007:10; Neyrey 2007:51). The Greek
word καταλαμβάνω, which is used in John 1:5 can have both the meaning of
‘comprehension’ (Köstenberger 1999:55) and ‘overcome’ (cf. ESV). It is typical of
John to use a word with a double meaning where both meanings can be applicable in
the context. In this case, it is probably true (Thompson 2016:279, 280).

When καταλαμβάνω is understood as comprehend, the object of ‘comprehension’
is the Word of God as embodied in Jesus Christ. Jesus said the essence of the Word
was that the Father had sent the Son to reveal the Father in this world (John 17:4–6;
Bruner 2012:983, 984). Van der Watt (2000:102) says, ‘Jesus is the Word in the
sense that He reveals just as a word reveals. Word can therefore be substituted by
reveal or to make known.’ This Word would judge those who did not accept it in the
end (John 12:48). Jesus also said evil was present in people’s lives, because they
did not accept the truth that was revealed in the Son. Evil reigned in their lives in the
form of sin, which enslaved them (John 8:34), because they believed the lies of
Satan,22 (John 8:44; 10:10; Manzanga 2007:72; Koester 2008:74, 75). Darkness in
somebody’s life means living according to the lies of Satan and conforming to his
lusts, thus having him as father (John 8:44; Neyrey 2007:156) and being the enemy
of God (Van der Watt 2000:357–359). Satan is a liar and a murderer and therefore
his children who believe his lies are liars and murderers. John carries the concepts of
liars and murderers ironically through his gospel. The Jews are shown as liars in their

22 Neyrey (2007:43) also points out that Jesus is identified by the word ‘true’, which stands in contrast to ‘what
the author considers obsolete, defective and unreliable.’
conspiracy against Jesus and as murderers of Jesus in the end. From the earthly perspective, they had the law on their side and Jesus was seen as just another revolutionary and a liar. From the point of view of the higher narrative, John reveals Jesus as the true Son of God, who spoke the truth and whom his accusers found guilty only because of the lies of the Jews. From this perspective, they could be seen as liars and murderous sons of Satan. Koester (2008:75) identifies three principle characteristics of Satan’s activity in John:

- deception: ‘…the devil spins a web of deception, seeking to trap people with the idea that Jesus is misleading them and that do not need the gifts God offers’ (John 8:42–44);
- hatred: ‘Jesus tells the world the truth about its evil, and the world hates him for it’ (John 7:7; 15:23);
- power of death: ‘The adversaries of Jesus show the influence of the devil by seeking to kill Jesus for speaking the truth (8:44, 59).’

There is also the possibility of the progress of the darkness (evil) in one’s life. It is illustrated in the life of Judas. In John 13:2, it is told that while supper was being served, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus; and in 13:27, it is said that the devil entered into Judas (Koester 2008:77). John states it was night when Judas went away from Jesus (John 13:30). Describing Judas going out in the night, away from Jesus and his disciples, John again shows his readers the contrast between the reality of light and darkness and Judas choosing the reality of darkness (Hwang 2007:135, 136). Koester (2008:77) says that Judas and Satan were united in purpose in that moment (John 13:27). Judas rejected the love of Jesus shown in the washing of the feet and revealed his love for darkness (3:19; 13:30). The exit of Judas symbolizes the widening of Satan’s activity. Jesus tells the other disciples that ‘the ruler of the world is coming’ (Koester 2008:78). Throughout the Gospel of John, the ever-increasing hatred and rage of the Pharisees and other leaders towards Jesus is shown. They progressed from efforts to catch Him saying something wrong (John 8:3–5) and making Him unpopular with the crowd to the decision to kill Him (John 5:18), and even to kill Lazarus whom He had raised from death (John 12:10). The ever-increasing darkness in the ranks of the leaders is

23 See Van der Watt (2008:87) on the negative use of love applied to the people who do not believe the Word.
spelled out by their lies and conspiracies. Satan’s lie, which they believed, is the same lie that Adam and Eve believed, namely that they could be God in their own lives, not trusting God’s word. Believing this lie led the leaders to seek the praise of men and not the praise of God (John 12:42,43). The consequences of their attitudes and actions were that they were unable to see what could be seen in the words and deeds of Jesus and therefore they were unable to believe (John 5:44; 12:35–40; Koester 2008:59–65; Williams 2016:91).

From one point of view, darkness reached a climax when the crowd, which had only recently honoured Jesus as king (John 12:13), were excited by their leaders to shout, ‘Crucify Him!’ (John 19:15). Already before the confusion and lack of order among the crowd, Jesus was found guilty based on a lie. Moreover, they were unable to recognise Him as the Messiah, who had been sent by the Father to do the work of the Father and to speak the words of the Father. Pilate, though having declared Him innocent a little while ago, gave Him over to be crucified because he feared the consequences of going against the crowd. The darkness in his mind is shown as looking after himself, being his own god, and not acting according to the truth (Waetjen 2005:385–394; Culpepper 1997:25, 26).

3.3 The Word that brings life (The new order narrative)

According to Genesis 1, God spoke and his word created order in a place that was without form and void (lacking purpose and worth; ‘without function’). In everything that came about because of his spoken word, He revealed Him as the creator who brought about that which is good – yes, very good (Gen. 1:31)! John reflecting on Genesis 1 characterises the Word as Jesus. Hebrew 1:2 says God spoke to us through his Son. In the beginning, God’s Word brought light and created a living space for all creatures. Genesis 2 describes creation as an action by which God created a space where the human being could live. Jesus came as the Word of God, in the Word was life and the life was the light for the world (John 1:1–5). The life in the Word brought light into the darkness and thereby created anew a living space for those who believe (see Bruner 2012:6).

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24 See Van der Watt (2007b) for a discussion of the relationship between Jesus as son and the Father as teacher.
The Word has life in Himself; he does not derive it from another source. Nothing in the world, including the human being, has life in it or in him (John 1). Only the Word of God can bring them life. Koester (2008:31) explains, ‘This means that in John’s Gospel life is understood relationally. To have life is to relate to the God who is the source of all life.’ (See also Van der Watt 2007a:58, 59.) Relating to the Word as the source of life is having light in your life. Not relating to the Word is staying in the dark and being dead. Knowing and keeping the words of Jesus is to know God and love Jesus (John 12:46). In John 6:57, we find these words of Jesus: καθὼς ἀπέστειλέ με ὁ ζῶν πατὴρ κἀγὼ ζῶ διὰ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ὁ τρώγων με κάκεινος ζήσει δι’ ἐμέ. Jesus lives through (διά) the Father and the one partaking of Jesus will live through (διά) Him. A certain relationship is made clear in this sentence. Jesus as human being is dependent on the Father for his life and the disciples are dependent on Jesus for their lives (Van der Watt 2000:205, 206).

Jesus gave the assurance that those who kept his word would be loved by the Father, and then God would come and make his home with them (John 14:23). Jesus promised his disciples that He would go and prepare place for them in his Father’s house (John 14:2). As in Genesis, God provides living space for those who love Him; those who do not believe will stay in the darkness.25

It is important to notice the similarities and the differences in the way that life was created in the beginning as opposed to the way new life is created according to John. In both instances, life is created by God; without Him, there would have been and will be no life. In both instances, life comprises more than just physical life. Physical life is the space in which real life has to be lived. Real life means living in a particular relationship with God. This relationship means being the image and representative of God (John 13:12–16). In the beginning, man was created within this relationship, but he willingly abandoned it. The coming of Jesus, the Light, brought everyone before the decision to accept the Light or to reject the Light (John 1). Jesus said that those who accepted the Light received the right to be children of God.26 You accept the light by trusting that He speaks the truth and therefore you accept the word He

26 Neyrey (2007:37–41) shows a chiastic structure in John 1:1–18. The logic of the structure indicates that the ‘giving of power to become children’ is the ‘key, pivotal centre and the major idea in the communication’ (p. 41) of this passage, while the second focus of the prologue is the Christology theme.
speaks (John 5:24). When you accept the word, the word must remain in you so that you will remain in Jesus (Latz 2010:161–168).

In the beginning, there was the possibility of losing the life that God had given. The new life according to John is an everlasting life. Having life means going permanently out of death over to life. It means you are in the hands of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that it is impossible to be taken out of their hands (John 6; 10:28–30). John uses the metaphor of birth to explain this process: you should be born from above (John 3:3) and thus receive life from the Spirit (John 3:5; 6:63; Koester 2016:237). Out of yourself, you cannot create this life (John 6:63–65). According to John, Jesus used the word γεννάω to describe to Nicodemus the way to the kingdom of God. This word (γεννάω) can either indicate being born from a mother (which is how Nicodemus understood it) or being begotten by a father (which fits John’s meaning with his emphasis on the role of God the Father) (Koester 2008:137, 138). The readers of John could refer back to 1:12–13 to understand γεννάω in this way. Adam and Eve lost the life and the relationship with God by rejecting the word of God, and by believing the opposing word of Satan, which brought the darkness of sin and death. Satan lied to them that they would not die when they disobey God and at the same time convinced them that God lied to them. They believed the lie and rejected the word of God (Gen. 3:1–7). According to John, Jesus said that one could only have life if his word – the word of Jesus – was abiding in him (John 5:38). The word was the truth, and the truth would set the one who knew it free (John 8:32). The opposing word was the word of Satan, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Those who believed the lies of Satan had him as their father and were doing his will (John 8:44). John quotes Jesus where he described sin as enslavement (8:34), being blind (9:39) and having Satan as father (8:44). In a sense, we can say that the entire Gospel is about the battle between darkness and light, life and death, as stated in John 1:5, ‘And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.’ John does not use explicit battle language after chapter 1. In the rest of the gospel, the reader is led to see Jesus as victor despite the onslaught of the Jews (John 5:16, 18; 7:1; 8:48; 10:31; 11:53; 18:12, 31; 19:3) and Satan/the Devil (John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2, 27). The cross is presented as a place where the glory of Jesus

27 Hoskins (2010:47–63) says that this verse connects the freedom brought by the Word with the exodus of Israel out of Egypt and to the Feast of Booths and the Passover.
would be seen (John 12; Van der Watt 2002:607) and the Satan thrown out (ἐκβάλλω) in that hour. ‘The consequence of Satan’s expulsion is “drawing all people to me”’, Kim (1998:109) emphasises the significance of the cross. Satan’s power had to be broken so that people could come to Jesus in faith and find true life.

Two of the levels in which John’s narrative plays itself out will now be discussed.

3.4 Two levels in the narrative

Researchers such as Sheridan (2012:235) have pointed out that the writer of the Gospel of John structured his narrative deliberately to have two levels.

3.4.1 The visible level

The first level consists of observable events. Jesus is shown to have been visibly present among the people. They heard his teachings and recognised his extraordinary wisdom (Mark 1:22). They drank the wine and ate the bread He created, but they also knew his father and mother and the town where He grew up. They knew Him to be the son of a carpenter (John 6:42). All those things led them to believe that He could not be the Messiah. The miracles that he did were visible signs of his capabilities: water turned into wine, the lame walked, the blind saw and bread was multiplied so that everyone could become satisfied. Yet, He did things that went against their tradition. He healed people on a Sabbath (John 5:9–18) and (according to them) did not keep the Sabbath (John 9:16). That brought doubt into their minds about Him being the Messiah. Seeing and hearing are important concepts in John for acquiring knowledge. The people could not see the Son of God in this man Jesus; they could not hear the narrative of God. They could not realise that two worlds were integrated in Him, the physical world they see with their eyes and the heavenly world of the Father, who sent his Son (Williams 2016:96).

When He became a threat to them, it seemed that the plan of Israel’s leaders to get rid of Him was working out nicely (Bruner 2008:140). One of his disciples worked with

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28 See Van der Watt (2001) about John’s reinterpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus.
29 More levels can be distinguished, for example the level that happened outside this world. It is the level from where Jesus was sent by the Father and where Jesus will prepare place in the house of his Father (John 14). Another level can be the purpose of the implied writer and the implied reader’s situation (see Van der Watt 2008:76, 77).
30 Koester (2008:59–65) makes an important contribution saying, ‘Many episodes in the Gospel show that the physical dimensions of human need point to needs that are of another order.’
them to take Jesus into custody (John 18). His other disciples left Him and fled. The disciple who had said that he would die for Him denied Him (John 13:38). The leaders got people to accuse Him of blasphemy and revolt. They got the crowd excited to ask for Him to be crucified. Then they even persuaded Pontius Pilate to deliver Him into their hands to be crucified, although the governor had declared Him innocent a little while before (John 18, 19). In the eyes of the leaders of Israel, Jesus was just another leader of the mob and a threat to peace, someone whom they had to get rid of. For all that anyone could see, Jesus died on the cross and that was all there was to the Man. He was just a person who had misled the crowd into following Him, but at that moment, it had all ended (John 19; Köstenberger 1999:185).

Nevertheless, there is another level in the narrative.

### 3.4.2 The invisible level

From the start of the Gospel, it is clear that there is another level in the narrative. This level is best described in John 1:18, where Jesus is quoted, ‘No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made him known’, and in John 1:14, where the author of the Gospel says, ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.’ In the Gospel, revelation and glory play a major role at the second level of the narrative. Jesus, in all that he did and said on earth, was revealing who his Father was (Williams 2016:85). The glory of the Son and the Father could be seen in this revelation. The purpose of all that the Son said and did was to glorify the Father. Therefore, He only taught what the Father had taught Him. He only spoke the words of the Father and did deeds according to the will of the Father (John 6; 12). Having done all that the Father had sent Him to do, He asked the Father to glorify Him with the glory He had possessed before creation (John 17:1). The interpretation of Robertson (2011:319) is that John wants to show that Jesus, with his words and deeds, was busy with ‘the inauguration of an alternative reality, the reign of God…’ Robertson continues, to ‘believe in “the Son of Man” (John 9:35) is to affirm that the new reality that Jesus incarnates and reveals is truly from God.’

Not everyone who sees Jesus and his works and hears his words understands the revelation and sees the glory (John 8:33). A major theme throughout the Gospel of
John is the contrast between those on the one side who see, hear, understand and believe, and those who see and hear, but do not understand or grasp the real depth of what they see, and therefore they do not believe (Van der Watt 2009:51). The contrast becomes very clear in John 9, where it is described how Jesus opened a blind man’s eyes. At first, although the man saw Jesus as a prophet, he knew that no one could open a blind man’s eyes if God (Cho 2006:193) did not give it to him. The Pharisees, despite the evidence of the man and his parents, could not accept the revelation of God in the healing (Meyers 2012:148–151). The once blind man pronounced his astonishment about their blindness and exclaimed in wonderment:

Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’ (John 9:30–33)

When Jesus met the blind man again, He led him to believe that He was the Messiah. About the Pharisees He said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind’ (John 9:39). Neyrey (2007:176) sees John 9 as a forensic process where Jesus was the accused, the blind man was the witness and the Pharisees were the judges. The judges found the blind man guilty and expelled him from the temple; they also found Jesus guilty. What they did not see was that there was another forensic process. In that process, they were the accused and the final predict over them was that they, while thinking they could see, were blind to the true narrative (Koester 2008:68–70; Thompson 2016: 281).

In John 12, there is another occurrence of the levels of visibility and invisibility in the narrative. On the one hand, Jesus was honoured as king by the people; on the other, his coming suffering and death was predicted in various ways (Meyers 2012:157, 158; Culpepper 1997:23). While Jesus was talking to the people, some Greeks came with the request to speak to Jesus. When Jesus heard about their request, He reacted with the words, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’ (John 12:23, 24). It is clear that John conveys the idea that Jesus understood the request of the Greeks as a turning point in his
ministry (Pate 2011:138). The hour that had come was the hour of his final suffering, deepest humiliation and his death on the cross. It was the hour in which his enemies would get what they wanted and He would seemingly be powerless in their hands. Yet, Jesus called this hour the hour of his glorification. He also said that the ruler of the world would be judged and cast out in that hour, and when He would be lifted up (referring both to his crucifixion and to his ascendance), He would draw all people to Him. It is clear that Jesus was convinced that his life was predetermined and that the victory over the chaotic powers was certain. His crucifixion and resurrection were the final deeds of God to enable victory over the darkness (Ellens 2010:78, 79; Breed 2014b).

Even the true followers of Jesus are shown as not fully comprehending the invisible level of the narrative (John 8:27; 10:6; 12:16; 13:7; 13:28; 20:9). Only later on did they understand the things they had not understood at first (John 20:9) In John 16:29, the disciples exclaim, ‘Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!’ The time between the death of Jesus and his appearance to his followers was a time of confusion. Thomas can serve as an example. He said that he would not believe that Jesus had been raised from death before he saw Him. When Jesus showed him his hands and feet and invited him to come and touch Him, Thomas understood what he was unable to understand all the time he was with Jesus, and he confessed it with a few but meaningful words, ‘My Lord and my God’ (Koester 2008:126, 127; Sylva 2013:91–99).

The history of the resurrection of Jesus brings the two levels of the narrative visibly together. Everyone who saw Him after his resurrection could see, understand and believe (Koester 2008:127). The greeting of Jesus to his disciples on two of the occasions He revealed Him to them is important. He said to them, ‘Peace be with you!’ (See John 19:20, 21 – NIV.) Kok (2011:136) comments on the appearance of Jesus to his disciples as follows:

Jesus surprisingly makes himself visible to the disciples, who still are caught up in fear and hide behind closed doors. In the prologue (John 1:1–18) John presented Jesus as the life-giving Word, associate creator from the dawn of time who now as resurrected Son of God utters life-creating words.
With his resurrection, Jesus created a new living space for his disciples. This living space was the peace He was giving them in the midst of possible persecution and fear (see Van der Watt 2007a:67).

3.5 God in control of both levels of the narrative

Throughout the gospel, God the Father and Jesus, as the one sent by the Father, are shown as being in control of both levels of the narrative. Already at the beginning of the gospel, the author announces that Jesus was the one who would baptise with the Spirit. In the rest of the gospel, nothing is said about Jesus baptising with the Spirit (narratological suspense). Only at the end of the gospel, John comes back to his announcement in John 1:33 (as a prolepsis). Jesus did the baptising symbolically after He had been raised from death by breathing on them (John 20:22). The author speaks from the certainty of the victory of Jesus and that all things would happen according to the plan of God. John’s use of the word ‘hour’ shows God in full control, even in control of the agents of darkness. Jesus could speak to the Samaritan woman about an hour that will come, ‘when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth’ (John 4:23). He could tell the people about an hour ‘when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live’ (John 5:25). The leaders of Israel tried to arrest Him, ‘but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come’ (John 7:30; also 8: 20). When the hour came, Jesus drank the cup willingly knowing that it was necessary so that the kingdom of God could come in the darkness of a sinful world. Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him and He told him to go ahead and do what he planned to do (John 6:71; 13:26). When Judas came with the band to arrest Him, He did not try to hide, but went to them of his own free will. Even in that moment before his arrest, He revealed the power of God. When He asked them who they were looking for, they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus used the words that God had used to reveal Him to Moses. He said, ‘I am’ (ἐγώ εἰμι). John describes the next moments in a way that there can be no misunderstanding that Jesus was more than just a mere man. When He said, ‘I am’ (John 18:6), all the soldiers fell to the ground. They certainly experienced something of God’s power at that moment. Again, John painted Jesus as the one in control of the situation (Meyers 2012:159). Jesus also told Pilate that his kingdom was not from this world; therefore, his followers did not fight (John 18:36). He gave Himself in their hands to become the King of kings by dying on the cross.
In his last moments alive on the cross, Jesus said (John 19:30), ‘It is finished.’ He deliberately finished the work that made recreation of the world possible. God used the enemy to help Jesus finish his work of redemption. The enemies of God thought they were in control, they thought their plans were working and they thought they had got rid of Him. However, they were only part of the plan of God, and He used their plans to finish his plan (Bruner 2012:784).

As in creation, the Spirit is involved in the penetration of the darkness, the darkness in men. No one can enter the kingdom except by being born again from above by the Spirit of God (John 3). This is where a person becomes aware that the two narratives are meeting, and how it happens is as great a mystery as the wind blowing. John reflects saying, ‘The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit’ (John 3:8). If you are not born again, you will not understand the things of God. That is why Nicodemus understands Jesus wrong every time (John 3:4, 9). You cannot see God’s kingdom in this world if the Spirit does not open your eyes. Those who accept the light are the ones who believe the Word and they receive the right to become children of God, but they ‘were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God’ (John 1:13; see also Van der Watt 2007a:55).

The people who ate from the bread and the fish Jesus had multiplied, came searching for Him and wanted to make Him king, because He had given them food to eat (John 6:26). Jesus told them that He is the bread of life from the Father, and they have to eat his body and drink his blood to participate in real life (John 6:53). The Jews could not understand what He meant and were murmuring against Him; they only understood the visible part of what was happening, namely the bread He gave them. The miracles of Jesus are called signs (σημεῖον) by John. In the sign, the transcendent reality and the visible reality meet. The bread He gave them was a sign of the things that could not be seen with their eyes, a sign of the relationship there should be between them and Jesus (Carter 2008:138). Jesus invited them to come to Him and to believe in Him, to eat Him (to make Him and his life part of them) as they had eaten the bread, but many did not accept his invitation (Brown 2003:148). Jesus explained that no person could come to Him except if the Father would draw such a person to Jesus (John 6:44). To be able to come to Jesus is granted to you by the Father (John 6:65) and this is done through the Spirit of God. The Spirit gives life, no
man can become alive on his one (John 6:63). The Spirit works through the Word of Jesus (John 6:63). Human competence can do nothing in this regard. God’s Spirit can guide one to Jesus, ‘and the instrument that God’s Spirit uses to bring God’s Word to human beings is the Word of and about the incarnate (enfleshed) Jesus of Nazareth’ (Bruner 2012:448). God is in control of everyone who will believe, who will see and hear.

3.6 Invisible made visible

Chan (2013:57) says that after the death of Jesus, the narrative in John presents two patterns of discipleship, namely ‘(a) those whose faith is based on seeing the resurrected Jesus, and (b) those who follow him even without having seen his resurrected body.’ He shows that John’s purpose, as described in John 20:30–31, is to live by the last-mentioned pattern of faith – believing without seeing. He (Chan 2013) points out that John narrates different reactions to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Mary, Thomas and Peter were able to believe only after they had seen the resurrected Jesus. The beloved disciple, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus believed before they had seen Jesus alive (Van der Watt 2002:93). At the empty grave, the beloved disciple saw the ‘face cloth’ and he believed, which is in contrast to Peter, who just saw the ‘linen cloth’ – no mention is made of him understanding the significance of what he saw (Hartin 1990:55; Sylva 2013:99). It was the same with Mary who saw Jesus, but did not recognise Him (Chan 2013:72). Chan (2013:72) indicates that the verb στρέφω is used in both verse 14 and 16, indicating an action of Mary. After she had spoken to the angels, she turned around (στρέφω) and saw Jesus, but she thought He was the gardener. Then Jesus called her name. Again, it is said that she turned (στρέφω). Chan’s point is that there is a possibility that στρέφω indicates a spiritual turn-around the second time (vs. 16) (Chan 2013:67). He points to John 12:40 for confirmation of this theory. According to John 12:40, Jesus quoted Isaiah, who said, ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn (στρέφω), and I would heal them.’ The opposite happened to Mary. She heard the Lord calling her name, turned around in her heart, saw Him, understood and consequently believed with joy and peace. As has been said, only the Father can give this understanding and faith to somebody through the work of the Holy Spirit.
(contra Brown 2003:149, 150). The fact is, at that moment, the light of the Word came into the heart and mind of Mary so that she could comprehend the plan of God that had been hidden to her up to that moment (Koester 2008:123–126). The readers of John’s gospel are prompted to believe without seeing; or, when they did not see in unbelief at first, to turn around and see (Sylva 2013:99; Thompson 2016:281).

John 12 also describes turning and not turning, seeing and not seeing. In addition, the way in which God brought people to see and understand after the ascension of Jesus is also described in John 12. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the invisible was made visible to some without them seeing Jesus and to others by seeing the resurrected Lord. The question is how the invisible will be made visible when Jesus is not bodily present on earth anymore.

John gives the answer in John 12,\(^\text{31}\) where various groups of people are described in their relationship with Jesus (Sheridan 2012:216–218). First, there were Mary and Martha, women that served Jesus, each of them in her own way. Judas and the chief priests were there planning, each of them in their own way, to kill Jesus. There were the crowds that were excited about the raising of Lazarus from death, and that came to see Jesus and Lazarus; they also came for the feast. They honoured Jesus as the King of Israel who came in the name of the Lord. Then there were those who saw and understood, but could not bring themselves to confess their beliefs, out of fear and their love of the honour man can give. It is as if John takes his readers into the milling crowd around Jesus, some who were still in the dark and some who had already come to the Light of the world (Sheridan 2012:219–222).

In the middle of this description, John describes a seemingly minor incident.\(^\text{32}\) Some Greeks came to Philip and asked to see Jesus. Phillip told Andrew, and the two of them went to tell Jesus. Then a surprising reaction of Jesus is recorded (Sheridan 2012:231; Köstenberger 1999:137–139). As seen in Figure 11: Structure of John 12:23–27 (p. 67), the text has a deliberate structure.

\(^{31}\) See Meyers (2012:154, 155) for, what she calls, the ‘pivotal function’ of John 12 in the Gospel.

\(^{32}\) This discussion will build on, without repeating, my article on the meaning of the διακον- word group in John 12 (Breed 2014b).
And Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Whoever loves his life loses it and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.

‘Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour?” But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.’ (ESV)

Figure 11: Structure of John 12:23–27

The Greeks’ request made Jesus aware that his hour had come (Sheridan 2012:233). That was the hour in which the grain (Jesus) had to die so that it could bear much fruit (John 12:25). Because of the prospect, Jesus was troubled in his soul and He considered whether He could ask the Father to save Him from that hour (vs. 27a). However, He realised that the entire purpose of his coming was captured in that hour. Therefore, He declared Him willing to do whatever would glorify the name of his Father (vs. 27b). That hour would also be the hour of his glorification, because He would complete his work (Carter 2008:316).

In the middle of the description of Jesus of the hour that had dawned for Him and his reaction to the demands of that hour, Jesus talked to his servants (διάκονος; vs. 26). To them a new hour had also come, as they were part of that hour in the life of Jesus (see Breed 2014b:3). That hour demanded from them willingness to lose their lives to glorify Jesus and the Father (vs. 25), because if someone wanted to serve (διακονέω) Jesus, he had to be willing to follow Jesus (Du Rand 1991:318; Van der Watt 2000:108). Serving and following Jesus has a unique character; it is closely related to the request of the Greeks. The Greeks were representatives of those about whom the Pharisees prophesied, ‘Look, the world has gone after him,’ (vs. 19) and about whom Jesus said, ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all
people to myself’ (vs. 32). Phillip and Andrew represented all the followers of Jesus who would from then on lead the people to Jesus (Waetjen 2005:294, 295).33

In Chapter 4 (see p. 73) an in-depth study of John 12:26 in the context of John’s gospel will be made (see also Breed 2014b). The meaning of the words διακονέω and ἀκολουθέω as used in John 12, will be studied and also what it means to be where Jesus is and to be honoured by the Father (vs. 26; see also Van der Watt 2000:331–333). What is important for this current chapter is to compare the words of Jesus that his διάκονος would be where He would be (vs. 26) with verses 44–50.

John 12 is the conclusion of the work of Jesus amongst the crowds; from John 13 and in the rest of the gospel, it is recorded how He worked only with his disciples. He prepared them for the work ahead of them when He would be with his Father (Van der Watt 2008:91).

The structure in John 12 is important (see Figure 12: Structure of John 12).

Figure 12: Structure of John 12

If this structure is accepted, it can be said that John deliberately connects verses 20–33 to verses 44–50 for his readers. When we ask about the meaning of the words of

33 Andrew was the first disciple of Jesus, as described by John, to lead others to Jesus (1:41). Philip was the second disciple described by John to lead somebody else to Jesus (1:45). He became Phillip the evangelist (Acts 21:8).
Jesus in verse 26 (‘and where I am, there will my servant [διάκονος] be also’), we can expect that verses 44–50 will help us understand the meaning of his words. In fact, we can say that what Jesus said in verses 44–50 about the relationship between Him and his Father, and between his work and the work of the Father, would also be true about the disciples and the relationship of their work to Jesus and the Father (Meyers 2012:162, 163; Koester 2008:128, 129; Köstenberger & Swain 2008:69, 70). Du Rand (1991:312, 317) makes the same point about discipleship in John’s gospel saying, ‘Discipleship is defined as a real sharing in the life and destiny of Jesus and a service of witness,’ and, ‘The parallel between Jesus and his Father should be projected on the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.’

Van der Merwe (1997) comments on Jesus’ sending of the disciples recorded in John 17:18 saying the following:

This would imply that the Jesus-disciples relationship (discipleship) is placed parallel to the Father-Son relationship. If discipleship is thus seated in and based on the Father-Son relationship, then the mission of Jesus constitutes the theological setting and framework in which Johannine discipleship should be interpreted. (p. 340)

In the above-mentioned relationship and in the enablement of the disciples to speak the words and do the deeds of the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit would play a decisive role. According to John 14:19–26, after Jesus’ ascension, the relationship between the disciples and the Son and the Father would be as close as Jesus predicted, ‘In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you’ (John 14:20). Jesus would manifest Him to those who loved Him (John 14:21). He would not leave them as orphans but would send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–18), who would be in them, teach them the words of Jesus, empower them to do the works of Jesus and keep the words of Jesus (John 4:12). Eventually, the purpose of all those deeds would be that the Father would be glorified in the Son (John 4:13; Shillington 2012:34–36; Köstenberger & Swain 2008:143–148). Hwang (2007:319) on investigating John 14 writes about the presence of Jesus with his disciples before and after his departure. In John 14, Jesus assured his disciples that they would never be separated from him. He was going away to prepare place for them so that they

34 Compare also Peterson (2013) for a discussion of the unity between Christ and his followers.
could live in the closest relationship with the Father. Hwang (2007:319) shows that the promise of this place or relationship is not just a promise for the time after this life. Through the work of the Spirit, they would live in this relationship with the Father after the departure of Jesus. In fact, they were already living in this relationship with the Father because of their relationship with Jesus.

When Thomas asked Jesus where he was going, Jesus gave the answer that is true for all times. He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the only way to the Father. That way is through the truth He brought and it brings life to those who believe. The disciples knew the way and the Father because they knew Jesus. Where Jesus was, the Father was present. Again, what was true then is true today. Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Him and this fact can be seen in the works of Jesus. In John 14:12, Jesus promised his followers, saying, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.’ This promise entails that the διάκονος of Jesus will be where Jesus is (14:3; 12:26; 17:24). In the light of John 14, it can mean that the Father and the Son will also be made visible in the works (and words) of the διάκονος. This is also clear from the words of Jesus recorded in John 12:45, ‘And whoever sees me sees Him who sent me.’ The one who serves and follows Jesus will be where Jesus is (cf. John 12:26). From this text, it is clear the διάκονος will make Jesus and the Father visible by their διακονία (Van der Merwe 1997:343).

Jesus was very clear that the authority of his teachings and his deeds rested in the fact that his words were the Father’s words and that his deeds were done in obedience to the Father. Likewise, the words and deeds of the διάκονοι of Jesus will have authority and will reflect the image of the Father and the Son as long as they are deeds and words of the Father and the Son (Bruner 2012:741). Being a true servant (διάκονος) of Jesus, truly serving (διακονέω) Him, means to die (John

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35 The results of the latest research on the meaning of the διάκονος word group are discussed and used in the following instances: Breed and Breed (2010); Breed (2012a:1–8); Breed (2012b:4,5); Breed (2014a). See also Collins (1990); Donfried (1990); Arndt, Danker & Bauer (2000); Gooder (2006); Hannaford (2005); Hentschel (2007); Latvus (2008).

On the basis of this research, it is accepted that the διάκονος word group does not have the exclusive or general meaning of humble service motivated by love for one’s neighbour, but also appears in the semantic context of ‘representative’, ‘messenger’ and ‘envoy’. The διάκονος word group can be used to describe the ministry as a whole, as well as every part of the ministry of the church (Breed & Breed 2010).
12:25) in the sense that you do not speak your own words and do your own deeds.\textsuperscript{36} If you die like this you will receive real life, that is, God will become visible in your life because you are doing his work and saying his words. The invisible God becomes visible in the διακονία of his διάκονοι. Jesus emphasised this point saying, ‘By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’ (John 13:35).

Jesus made the invisible visible with his resurrection. The διάκονοι will make the invisible visible with their resurrection from death that will be visible in their words and deeds of love (Du Rand, 1991:318).\textsuperscript{37} With their διακονία of words and deeds, they will proclaim the Word and spread the light, but according to John’s description in John 12 and 20, there will be different ways in which people will come to faith or not come to faith. Some will be like Mary and Peter, who first saw but did not really see. Some will be like the beloved disciple and Joseph of Arimathea, for whom the light dawned immediately, before others could see (Koester 2008:127). Still others, like some of the Pharisees, will never see the light.

From another point of view, one could say that the διάκονοι will make the reign of King Jesus visible with their διακονία. John 12 depicts Jesus as king, the crowd honoured Him as king and his crucifixion is portrayed as an enthronement and as a victory over the enemy (John 12). The disciples became part of this reign by dying to themselves. Jesus conquered the enemy and by dying on the cross, by being seemingly weak, He attracted people to Him, and is still attracting people to Him. On the cross the depth of God’s love, as well as the magnitude of his power, became visible. In the same vein, the depth of God’s love and the magnitude of his power will be visible when the followers of Jesus crucify themselves in their διακονία. In this way, God can bring order in the darkness of somebody’s life, in a marriage, a family, in a congregation, a group of people or a country.

\textsuperscript{36} See Van der Watt’s article on mimesis (Van der Watt 2014) for an in-depth discussion of Jesus’ representation of the Father and the disciple’s representation of Jesus. Also see Van der Watt (2007b) for a discussion of the imagery of education between Father and Son in John 5:19–23.

\textsuperscript{37} Van der Watt (2002) shows that the author of the Gospel of John structured his gospel deliberately to bring the readers to the choice to believe or not. When Thomas was confronted by the living resurrected Jesus, he believed because he saw Jesus. Jesus said to him that those who would believe without seeing would be blessed. In the following verses, John states his intention with writing the gospel, namely that the reader would believe. The conclusion of the evangelist is that the gospel he has written will make Jesus visible to the readers so that they could ‘see’ and believe (Van der Watt 2002). John 12 introduces the διακονία of the followers of Jesus to this purpose of John. They will carry the word to people and make Jesus visible with their service.
3.7 Conclusions

John wrote to a congregation using his knowledge of the history of Jesus Christ to teach them about Jesus and his mission on earth.

John shows his readers that the coming of Jesus Christ to earth was part of a battle between the light (God in Jesus) and the darkness, life and death, the truth of God and the deception (lies) of Satan.

John describes the two levels in the narrative of the life of Jesus Christ and of everyone that met Him via his words and deeds. The one level (visible) was there for everyone to see, hear and taste. The other level (invisible) was also there to see, hear and taste but only for them who were regenerated by the word and the Holy Spirit because the visible was representative of something invisible.

The invisible that was made visible by the words and deeds of Jesus Christ is the glory of the Father and his mission to reconcile the world (people) to Him. This was done by overcoming the Satan and death through the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

According to John, Jesus came to do the work of the Father and to speak his words, in that way representing the Father and making the Father known. Anybody that saw Jesus could see the Father in Him.

Those people who accepted the message that Jesus proclaimed by his words and deeds, became part of the relationship between the Father and the Son. They were one with the Father and the Son and representatives of God to speak his words and do his work.

In John 12, the role of the διακονία of the followers of Jesus is described. Those who want to serve Jesus should follow Him in his mission and then they shall be in the same relationship to the Father as Jesus was. They will represent Jesus and the Father, do the work of Jesus (and therefore of the Father) and speak their words. In this way, they will make the invisible visible, conquering the darkness and death in people’s lives and bringing them to Jesus.

A διάκονος of Jesus makes God visible by his or her διακονία. Διακονία can be described as doing the work of God and speaking his word, following Jesus.
Chapter 4

The use of the διάκονον- word group in John 12:26: Διακονία as following Jesus

Synopsis

This chapter investigates the meaning of the διάκονον- word group in the Bible with the focus on its use in the Gospel of John. John 12:26 is considered in depth. The results of this investigation reveal important differences from other recent research on this word group. The results of the research will be applied to the ministry in congregations.38

4.1 Introduction

Although most parts of Scripture where the διάκονον- word group appears have been studied, not all of them have been adequately investigated. Moreover, often the Scriptural context in which the word group appears has not been taken into account at all. Little attention has been paid to the Gospel of John in this regard (Collins 1990:12, 48, 245, 248; Hentschel 2007:10, 16, 214, 236, 248, 257, 286, 340, 341).

This article aims to provide an exegesis of John 12:26 and to investigate the meaning of the διάκονον- word group. After having considered the exegetical results, the existing research on this word group will be critically evaluated. In investigating the meaning of the διάκονον- word group, the importance of the Scriptural context, the book and the chapter in which the words occur will be taken into account at all times. The results of the research will be applied to the ministry in congregations.

4.2 John 12:26

The place of John 12:26 in the narratological structure of John 12:23-28 can be helpful to understand the meaning of the διάκονον- word group in this pericope (see Figure 13: Narratological structure of John 12:23–28, p. 74).

38 Parts of this chapter have been published in the article, ‘The meaning of the diakon word group in John 12:26 applied to the ministry in congregations’ (Breed 2014b).
In the quest to understand John 12:26, it is important to understand the narratological structure of John 12:23–28. The glorification of Son and Father forms an inclusion of the pericope (12:23a and 28b). After announcing that the hour of his glorification has come, Jesus uses intense announcement words (ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν) to make three conditional statements, one about his own future and two about the future of his disciples (12:24–26). Verse 26 should therefore be read in close connection with
verses 24–25. Verse 27 is closely connected with verse 23, as it is the emotional reaction of Jesus to his realisation that his hour has come and that He must consider and decide what to do in this hour. The meaning of the διάκον- word group as it is used in this context will now be explored.

4.2.1 Who can be Jesus’ διάκονος?
In an enquiry into the semantic range in which the διακον- word group is used in this verse (12:26), it is important to establish to whom the indefinite pronoun τις refers. According to Louw and Nida (1989:814), it indicates someone or something undefined. Verse 26a could in other words be translated, ‘If anyone serves Me.’

To whom is Jesus talking if one considers the context in which this verse appears? Throughout the chapter, Jesus is presented as surrounded by crowds of people who, after the resurrection of Lazarus, came to see Lazarus and Jesus. Many were there for the Passover. The high priests adjudicated the event by the telling words, ‘Behold, the world is gone after Him’ (John 12:19). The author presents these words by the high priests as prophetic, because just after he quotes their exclamation he mentions the arrival of the Greeks. He relates that they asked to see Jesus (John 12:20; Salier 2004:22). Jesus referred to this incident later when He said that his crucifixion would result in Him drawing all (πάντας) to Him (John 12:32). The attraction of all people began with the arrival of the Greeks (Painter 1991:323). The new pattern according to which people would come to Jesus took shape at that point. That was the hour that had come (John 12:23). In future times, when Jesus would be on earth no longer (when He would be elevated), people from all over the world would be drawn to Him by his followers (like Philip and Andrew). John 12:26 should be understood in light of the worldwide following of Jesus (Obielosi 2008:250). The word τις, therefore, refers literally to whoever from all of humanity wants to serve Jesus.

From verse 29, it is clear that Jesus was again surrounded by a crowd of people when He said the words of verse 26, reacting directly to the request of the Greeks to see Him. It is not clear whether the Greeks were present or not when He uttered the words. In either case, the words of Jesus were an answer to the request of the Greeks – perhaps communicated to them by the disciples. The arrival of the Greeks also made it clear to Jesus that the hour of his final suffering and death had arrived (verse 23, 24; Salier 2004:123). Therefore, at that moment, He proclaimed to all what
it entailed to serve Him. Jesus spoke to the Greeks, to his disciples, to the entire crowd and even to those leaders that believed in Him, but did not want to confess their belief out of fear (John 12:42). The directive in John 12:26 is therefore a general prescription that holds true for every believer. Due to the frequency of the διακον- word group in this verse, the directive may be viewed as a definition of a διάκονος of Jesus Christ (Lee 2010:118).

The opinion of Collins (2006:27–32; 1990:194) that διακονία in the New Testament primarily describes the service of people in the special services (offices) is questionable, because of John's definition of διακονία, which is founded on the words of Jesus.39 It is clear that the author of the Gospel of John is of the conviction that every person who follows Jesus could be a διάκονος, i.e. a servant of Jesus. The question can be asked if the word διάκονος in the early church would only have been used to indicate a person in a church office, would John so explicitly have connected the word with every follower of Jesus, in his gospel written to a congregation or congregations.

4.2.2 Serve (διακονέω) and follow (ἀκολουθέω)

It is clear from verse 26 that a person cannot serve Jesus if such a person does not follow Him. It is therefore important to establish what ἀκολουθέω means in the context of John 12:26. John 12 forms the conclusion of the first part of the Gospel of John (Thomas 2004:80; Van der Watt 2008:91). The first part (chapters 1–12) is often referred to as the book in which the miracles of Jesus are described. The second part (chapters 12–20) is referred to as the book that narrates the suffering (and glorification) of Christ (Thomas 2004:61, 62; Hamilton Jr. 2010:407, 415).

John 12, therefore, forms part of the third section of the body, where signs are followed by claims. Coetzee (1976:15) calls John 12:1–50 the first episode in which Jesus, the true King, who came to die for his people, is described. Coetzee suggests

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39 Collins has opened the way to a new understanding of the διάκον- word group (see also the references in the introduction), but in this matter his exegesis is questionable.
a ‘structure’ (my translation) for this book (see Figure 14: Structure of the book John (Coetzee 1976:15) below).40

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Figure 14: Structure of the book John (Coetzee 1976:15)

John 12 starts with the announcement that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before Passover. In the sentences following the announcement, the evangelist links the arrival of Jesus to the resurrection of Lazarus and Mary’s anointing of Jesus, as well as to Judas’ betrayal (vss. 1–4). All three these events pointed to Jesus’ death. Lazarus’ resurrection also prepares the reader for the resurrection of Jesus. The explanation of Jesus of Mary’s deed made it clear that He would die and be buried, and that He would not be with them forever. The resurrection of Lazarus led crowds flocking in, which finally convinced the leaders of the Jews that Jesus had to be killed. The entire chapter bears the stamp of the approaching suffering and death of Jesus (Thomas 2004:81). However, Jesus was also glorified as King and Messiah by Mary’s anointing, the crowds, the Greeks and the Father. The contrast between the

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40 Bruner (2012) gives the following broad structure: John 1–12: Jesus’ public ministry; John 13–17: Jesus’ discipleship sermons and prayer; John 18–21: Jesus’ passion and resurrection. John 12 forms a turning point in this structure. Neyrey (2007:225–226) also divides the Gospel into two parts and calls John 1–12, ‘The book of signs’, and John 13:1–3, ‘The second prologue’, and the introduction to John 13–21, ‘The book of glory’. He says that John 12 is the fulfilment of the prediction made in the first prologue that Jesus will be rejected by his own people and by the world, but that there will be those that receive Him. From John 13 onwards, Jesus works with those who receive Him, his διακόνοι.

Köstenberger (2002:32) also names John 1–12 ‘The book of signs’. He divides the signs into three parts, namely the inaugural signs (2:1–11; 2:14–17; 2:23; 3:2; 4:41–45); signs amidst mounting controversy (5:1–15; 6:1–15; ch. 9) and the climactic sign, i.e. the raising of Lazarus (ch. 11). According to him, John 12:20–50 describes ‘the dawning age of the Gentiles and the signs of the Messiah rejected by the old covenant community’. Chs. 13–20, according to his structure, is ‘the book of glory’, and describes ‘Jesus’ passion and preparation of the new covenant community’. It is clear from these structures that John 12 can be seen as a turning point in the Gospel.
King who had to suffer and die, and who conquered through death, runs through the entire chapter.

The image that Jesus used (12:24) to explain the necessity and purpose of his death combined all these themes. Jesus was like a grain of wheat that had been sown, the grain had to die to fulfil its purpose, namely to carry much fruit (12:24). The ‘much fruit’ comprised all who Jesus would draw towards him (12:32). Jesus said that his soul was distraught in anticipation of his suffering. The question arose in Him whether He should ask the Father to save Him from the hour of death (John 12:27, 28). However, he concluded that He could not do that because the purpose of his coming to the earth would be fulfilled by the events of the hour of his suffering and death. Therefore, his decision was that He would rather glorify his Father by completing the charge (vss. 27, 28; Köstenberger & Swain 2008:69). In conclusion, to follow Christ means to come to the same decision after consideration, and to fulfil the task given by the Father, even if it would mean your death. Mullins (2003:289) says that the point of contrast is found in the words ‘alone’ and ‘much fruit’. Commanding followers of Jesus to die so that they may live is thus also a command to bring people to Jesus.

The structure of verses 23–28 suggests that whoever served Jesus were to participate in the events of his hour of suffering, death and glorification (Neyrey 2007:215) (see Figure 15: Structure of John 12: 20–27, p. 79). Verse 27 (exposition by Jesus of the hour) continues where verse 24 (the announcement that the hour had come and the meaning of the hour) has left off, and verses 25 and 26 are insertions that describe the influences of the hour on those who want to serve Jesus (Ridderbos 1992:68). The structure used here suggests that the followers of Jesus were made part of the hour that had come for Jesus with the arrival of the Greeks.\textsuperscript{41} The request of the Greeks not only ushered in the particular hour in the life of Jesus, but also a particular hour in the lives of those who served Him. The assignment of Jesus was limited to the Jews (Matthew 15:24); the disciples would carry the Gospel to the nations.

\textsuperscript{41} Compare Neyrey (2007:214), who indicates a chiastic structure in 12:23–26, where the hour of the glorification of Jesus (12:23) and the honour that those who serve Him receive from the Father (12:26c) form the A-A leg. The B-B leg is formed by the image of the grain of wheat (12:24) and the directive that believers should be willing to lose their lives (12:25–26b).
The hour in which the task of Jesus was transferred to his followers concurred with his glorification, which was realised in his death, resurrection and ascension. Serving Jesus means to follow Him; following Him means to participate in his task. This directive requires that one should be willing to lose one’s life, in this manner bearing much fruit in order to glorify God (12:25; MacArthur 2005:11; Van der Watt 2008:89; Von Wahlde 2010:555; Thomas 2004:80). Van der Watt (2008) explains the parallelism as follows:

Within the confines of the antithetical parallelism in 12:25–26, service functions as explanation of what it means to hate one’s life. (p. 91)

Serving Jesus does not mean that one should attempt to repeat his unique reconciliatory work, but rather that one should, like Him, be willing to give one’s life in the service of God and by accepting his call so that there will be much fruit to the glory of God (Ridderbos 1992:70–71). The reader could identify himself with the words of Jesus about his troubled soul in the light of the decision he had to make. The author suggests to the reader to make the same decision as Jesus – to honour the Father.

The διακον- word group is not used in John 12 to describe humanistic love, but service to other people as a directive from God. The aim is to realise the victory of
Jesus over die wicked in one’s life so that one will also be a διάκονος and a follower of Jesus. Being a διάκονος means to be a disciple, and a disciple should serve as Jesus served. This refutes the radical distinction that Hannaford (2005:83–88) makes between διακονία and discipleship. Hannaford (p. 88) argues that discipleship comprises the entire life of the believer and that διακονία only refers to service that carries a sacramental character and is completed on behalf of the church. There is no such distinction made by John.

4.2.3 Serving, following and loving

To love Jesus above everything, even your own life, means that you will hate anything that might come between you and serving Jesus (12:25).

Jesus revealed the love of God in his death, through which He conquered sin and Satan. This is the Gospel that John describes. This is the Word the Father proclaims to all people through Jesus saying, ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16). In John 12 and elsewhere, the evangelist tells that Jesus repeatedly referred to the Father who had sent Him (John 3:17, 34; 4:34, 38; 5:23, 24, 30, 36, 38; 6:38, 39, 40, 44, 57; 7:28, 29, 33). In John 17:16, he reports the description by Jesus of the faith of the disciples, namely that they were the ones who believed that the Father had sent Him. The aim of the victory of Jesus was to attract all to Him (12:32). In John’s description of the Gospel, the emphasis is on relationships. Jesus revealed the relationship between Him and his Father – they are one (10:30). Jesus glorified the Father by only doing and saying those things that the Father had sent Him to say and do (8:38), and by completing his assignment in that manner (17:4), He revealed their relationship and fulfilled his calling on this earth (17:4). His purpose was that his servants would understand the relationship and would believe that He had been sent so that they would have part in the relationship (17:6–11). The possibility that the servants of Jesus can understand, believe and become part of this relationship flowed from the Father’s love for the world (17:23).

In John 13, it becomes clear that Jesus executed his assignment because of his love for his own people; it was love to the extreme (death) (13:1). It is also clear from the following that John 13 is closely linked to John 12: Both chapters reflect the fact that the hour of Jesus had come with the approaching Passover as background. Jesus
washed the feet of his disciples, which the evangelist links closely to Mary’s anointing of the feet of Jesus. Jesus became distraught about the hour of his suffering, which was confirmed by the betrayal by Judas (12:27 and 13:21). Judas’ departure confirmed the dawning of the glorification of Jesus by the Father, and through that, the glorification of the Father (13:3, 32). The arrival of the Greeks was a similar confirmation (12:20–23). Jesus involved the disciples in his directive and called them messengers (12:25–26 and 13:14–17). He who followed Jesus in being a messenger would experience joy (12:26 and 13:17). Chapter 13 concludes with the narrative of Peter, who followed Jesus, but who had to hear that he would betray Jesus. This chapter may rightfully be viewed as a more detailed elaboration of the hour of the suffering and glorification of Jesus, and therefore of what it means to serve and follow Jesus (Clarke 2000:240).

Van der Watt (2008) indicates that in the rest of the Gospel according to John, the meaning of διακονία is described in more detail:

All the references to following in chapters 13–21, are to Peter (except 21:20 that refers to the other disciple, although Peter is mentioned as seeing this disciple). As will be argued, this is significant. Peter becomes the narratological example of what it means to come to the point of laying down one’s life and being a servant. In the end he will indeed follow Jesus where He goes. (p. 91)

Van der Watt (2008:92) continues that John 12:23–26 closely correlates with John 13:31–14:3 with regard to word use and the themes addressed. By comparing 13:31–38 and 21:15–22 he indicates six thematic agreements between these two parts, and concludes as follows:

The focus does not fall on Peter dying, but on him serving the Lord lovingly by caring for the sheep of the Lord. In chapter 21, his willingness to lay down his life is interpreted in terms of his loyal service. This is what is required from a servant according to 12:25. In that sense dying (hating his life/serving in terms of 12:26), reinterpreted by the implied reader in terms of 12:25–26, implies caring, tending and feeding the Lord’s sheep. (p. 93)

Serving Jesus means to love Him as well as his followers, so much that one would be willing to lay down one’s life in executing the directive from the Father to lead people to Jesus and to care for his flock. Διακονία is inseparable from the humble and
sacrificial service of love of Jesus, as described in John 13, and from the directives to Peter in John 21:15–22. In Peter's case, it means the care of the flock of the Lord (John 21:15–22), but Jesus also said unambiguously that it might mean something else to another διάκονος (John) (John 21:20–22).

The study of the διάκονος word group in John 12 confirms the finding that this word group does not express a moral ethical love service (Collins 1995:159–178), but a διάκονος, who is according to John someone dispatched by God with a specific mandate. However, διακονία is closely linked to love for God and the children of God. The author of the Gospel does not hold the conviction that διακονία has nothing to do with love for your neighbour as Collins (1995:159–178) suggests. Researchers that separate the διάκονος as ‘messenger’ from the ‘someone providing service of love’, impoverish the meaning of this word group (Collins 2002a:87). Elliott (2000:755, 756) also shows the error of Collins (1990:232) when the latter minimises the expression of service in mutual love by the διακον- word group. The necessity of studying the διακον- word group in Scriptural context has been clearly proven by the preceding research. It disproves Collins’ claim that John 13 has nothing to do with the διακονία of Jesus. However, he is correct when saying that service work does not describe the work of the individual as distinct from the congregation, but that it is service that flows from the unity between believers mutually and between believers and their Lord. This becomes quite clear from the link established between John 12 and 13 (John 13:12–17; cf. Hannaford 2005:83).

It seems from the use of the διακον- word group in John 12 as if this word group is filled with a particular Christian content. This assumption is made because of the suggestion of Elliott (2000:755–760) about the use of these words in 1 Peter. However, this will have to be confirmed in the following chapters on studies of several different parts from Scripture.

4.2.4 Jesus’ διάκονος will be where He is

Place and movement play a very important role in John 12 (Obielosi 2008:244). In this chapter, constructs referring to place and movement are used with two meanings. First, they may indicate the physical place where one finds oneself or the physical place where you are going (7:53; 8:35; 11:20, 31) second, they may refer to
the place where the people are with whom you cast your lot (6:64–67; 14:2; 19:27; 20:10). The meaning of the words of 12:25 and 26 should also be understood in this light. The fact that the διάκονος of Jesus will be where Jesus is, can be explained as follows. The detailed description of the movements of Jesus, the places where He went and what He did there, reflect where He was in his heart. In his heart and his conviction, He was at the place where He had to go to meet the hour of suffering intentionally because He wanted to glorify his Father and because He wanted to bear much fruit, like a dying grain of wheat. He did that to attract many to Him. He was driven to go where He went and to say what He said out of love for his Father and for those who wanted to serve his Father – so that Father and Son, and those who served them would be glorified. By acting in that way, He was the true διάκονος, who served his Father as well as those that followed Him. This is also the place where his διάκονος will be.

Those who served Him had to follow his example by going wherever they were needed (see 21:18–19) and saying whatever was needed so that Father and Son, as well as those who followed Jesus in their διακονία, could be glorified. According to Anderson (1999:42), this fact is expressed in 12:25–26: ‘He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.’ Such a servant, no matter in what times he lives, will be where Jesus is, not only in his suffering but also in his glory. He will be where Jesus is in his attitude, namely to be willing to give his life so that everyone can be drawn to Jesus. He will one day view the glory of Jesus when he is with Jesus forever (John 17; Van der Watt 2008:94). He will also, like Jesus, triumph as king over evil (12:31).

In John 12, four διακόνοι with this attitude are sketched. Verses 1–3 seems to offer unnecessary information on a first read. The reader’s attention is caught by the use of the verb διακονέω to describe Martha’s service to Jesus and Lazarus. She looked after their needs and did not think of herself but of them. Subsequently, Mary is described using expensive balm with which she served Jesus. In verses 7 and 8 it is said that the crowd who had seen that Jesus resurrected Lazarus from death, acted as witnesses so that people glorified Jesus as King when he rode into
Jerusalem on the donkey (Anderson 1999:38). Lazarus is clearly highlighted as an agent through whom people came to faith because they could see in him that Jesus had the power to command life from death (12:9–11). In the same chapter, John relates how Philip and Andrew became the instruments through which the message of the Greeks, who wanted to see Jesus, reached Him. However, several people that did not believe or identify themselves with Jesus are also sketched in this chapter. In 12:4, Judas, in contrast to Mary and Martha, is sketched in his greed and falsity. The negative reaction of the Pharisees is shown in 12:10, 19, 42 and 43. In 12:37–40, the hard-heartedness of some in the crowd is described. Through them, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled that some would turn a deaf ear to the Word.

Anderson (1999:38) indicates that the Christology in the Gospel according to John is inseparably linked to Jesus as Messenger of the Father. He was, as Moses had been (Deuteronomy 18:15–19), God’s agent, who spoke and acted on behalf of the Father and with the Father’s authority. In John, the emphasis is not on the fact that Jesus carried the wrath of God when He conquered death, but on faith. People came under the judgement of God due to unbelief; they were saved because they believed that the Father had sent the Son to save them (Koester 2005:147). The fact that Jesus was sent by God, entailed that Jesus Himself did not judge the unbelievers. He said Himself that his words would judge them because they were the words of the Father who had sent Him (12:47–50). Those who accepted his testimony would become one with Him as if He was one with the Father (John 17); in this regard, they were where Jesus was (12:26). Even as in the time of Jesus, serving Jesus means that He will be followed, also in the task that the Father laid upon Him, namely to bring the Father’s words to people.

At the time of Jesus, there were several aspects connected with sending an agent (Harrison 1988:393; Kittel, Bromiley & Friedrich 1964–1976:688). These aspects can also be detected in John’s description of the mission of Jesus:

- A clearly described mission assigned to the agent (17:1–8)
- The agent’s subordination to the sender’s commands or his will (8:55; 12:27, 28)
- The agent speaking and acting with the authority of the one who sent him (15:20)
- The agent is under the protection of the sender (1:51; 20:12)
• The faithful and full completion of the task given to the agent (John 17)
• Reporting back to the sender by the agent after completing the assignment (John 17)

All off these aspects will also be true of the διάκονος of Jesus that follows Him (13:14–16; 15:20). The διάκονος of Jesus is also an agent that communicates the words of Christ – which are the Words of the Father – to others (see Chapter 3, p. 53). The aim of the communication is that others should accept the words in faith and believe them, and that they would be drawn to Christ by the words. Whoever believes and follows Jesus, serves Him, and whoever serves Jesus, will be with Him. It is clear from John 15 and 17, that being with Jesus entails that believers become part of the community between the Father and the Son, and that believers are one with each other. When this unity becomes visible, it makes the testimony of the believers effective so that others will also come to the faith (John 17:20–23; Kysar 2001:372).

4.2.5 Serve and honour

Jesus described the hour that had come the hour of his glorification. He also said that whoever served Him would be honoured by the Father. The hour that came for Jesus was the hour of his final suffering, crucifixion and death. The question is how events that led to his death on the cross could also be his glorification. John 12:31–33 provides a possible answer. When Jesus was crucified (exalted), the judgement came over the world. The leaders of the world were driven out and Jesus drew those whom his Father had given Him closer to Him. In that way, He completed the task for which He had been sent to the world. While Jesus was glorifying the Father, the Father glorified Him. John presents the death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Jesus in such a way in his Gospel that it becomes one big moment of glory (Romanowsky 2005:101). Death and suffering for Jesus go hand in hand with glorification, and it is the same for those who serve Him. His servants should be willing to die in executing their task, safe in the knowledge that the Father will honour them (Dennis 2006:335). Koester (2005:153) formulates the relationship between cross and glorification as follows:

If glory defines what the crucifixion is, the crucifixion defines what glory is. The crucifixion manifests the scope of divine power by disclosing the depth of divine love.
In John 13:1–5, the hour of the final service of Jesus is linked to the fact that He came from the Father and will return to the Father, but also to the fact that the Father gave everything into his hands. In the middle of this description of his service, the work of Satan and Judas is mentioned (Moloney 1998:372).

The διακονία of Jesus was enacted with the certainty of his being sent by the Father and of his glorification by the Father on his return to the Father, but also with the certainty that He would conquer evil because the Father had enabled Him to do so (had given all things in his hands). These verses (13:1–5) expand on John 12:26. In John 12:26, the statement that the Father would honour Jesus’ διάκονος and the task of the διάκονος, is linked to the purpose of the coming of Jesus to the earth (12:26, 27), as well as to the expulsion of evil (12:31). When John 12:26 is read with 13:1–5, it can be deducted that the διακονία of a follower of Jesus is also enacted with the certainty of the honour that the Father gives (Hentschel 2007:10). This honour includes the certainty of victory over evil and the certainty that the follower will be with Jesus (also see John 14:1–3; 17:41) and will be one with the Father and the Son (also see John 17:11, 21–23).

The people who did not want to confess Jesus openly (12:42) are described as people who regarded the honour they received from people higher than the honour that God gave (12:43). In other words, they wanted to serve Jesus without following Him in his suffering and his glorification. Serving and following Jesus includes the willingness to openly confess Him (ὁμολογέω = to say the same, to agree).

4.2.6 Conclusions

1. In John 12:26, the meaning of the διακονο- word group has to be found in the link with following Jesus, unity with Jesus (being where He is) and glorification by the Father.

2. Following Jesus entails that the διάκονος serves Jesus by making the task of Jesus, of drawing people near to Him, his or her own.

3. Being where Jesus is entails that the διάκονος becomes part of the suffering, death and unity of Jesus with the Father.

Ridderbos (1992:91) says that the things that are predicted in chapters 11 and 12 are starting to happen now.
4. To be honoured by the Father means to have part in the mutual glorification of Father, Son and διακόνοι. The certainty that this glorification offers through the Father enables the διάκονος to serve and follow Jesus.

5. A διάκονος of Jesus distinguishes the hour of the providence of God in his life and intentionally chooses to serve God in what that hour demands of him.

6. Service to others is founded on the victory of Jesus. Because the διάκονος is convinced of the victory of Jesus, he or she puts the victory of their Lord into effect by providing service out of boundless love to others. In this way, he or she is a messenger proclaiming the message of God's love for the world.

7. The meaning of the διακον- word group is found in the mutual unity of the believers (ecclesiologically) and their unity with their Lord.

8. ‘The crucifixion manifests the scope of divine power by disclosing the depth of divine love’ (Koester 2005:153); thus, a διάκονος discloses the love of God by sacrificing himself in service so that the divine power can be manifest through his service.

9. Jesus conquered the evil by his διακονία to the Father and established his kingship by fulfilling all that the Father commanded Him to do.

The next part of this chapter will look at the significance of these conclusions for practical ministry in a congregation.

4.3 Significance for practical ministry in the church

When a congregation accepts the Bible as the Word of God, John 12 should play a role in the way they plan and do their ministry. The following conclusions made from the foregoing exegetical research can form part of the vision for a ministry plan (cf. also Breed 2012b).

4.3.1 You cannot be a follower of Jesus and not serve (cf. 4.2.6.1)

One of the basic vision statements of every congregation should be that a διάκονος follows Jesus in his διακονία. A follower of Jesus is either involved in ministry or he/she is not a true servant of Jesus. That means that no one in the church should be allowed to avoid service in any way. The members of a congregation must be purposefully equipped and inspired to perform their ministry with the same attitude as
Jesus. Ministry (διακονία) means following Jesus in his obedience to and relationship with the Father with the resolution to honour God and in expectation that God will honour them.

4.3.2 All ministries are the ministry of God (cf. 4.2.6.1; 4.2.6.4)
It is important for both the leaders of the congregation and all the members to understand the ministry they receive. Further, when performing the ministry, they should experience it as the ministry of God to and through them. The certainty of being merely a servant called to work with the Lord in his ministry is the source of the congregation’s endurance and readiness to sacrifice as much as the task ahead may demand of them.

The congregation are performing the Lord’s ministry, not their own. This view on ministry must be an integral part of every equipping opportunity, the way the congregation talk about ministry, how they decide what to do and what not to do, the way they pray, preach and teach. When this is the attitude towards ministry, the congregation would be able in less fruitful times to wait patiently for the time of God.

4.3.3 Ministry results in experiencing unity (4.2.6.1; 4.2.6.3; 4.2.6.4; 4.2.6.7)
The congregation must be led to experience their unity by equipping them to serve each other and guiding them to receive the ministry willingly from each other. The more they are willing to open up their deepest hurts, anger, sins and doubt, the better they can minister to each other and the deeper the unity grows.

Together they must be led in the worship service and everywhere else to experience their unity with the Lord and each other. They must experience the depth of the existing unity between the διάκονος and his or her Lord and the existing unity between the διακόνοι of the Lord. The promise of Jesus that the Father will honour his διάκονος must be an integral part of the proclamation of the Word and every equipping opportunity. The mutual glorification of the Father and the Son and the διακόνοι is a natural fruit of the ministry performed under guidance of the Holy Spirit. The certainty of the glorification by the Lord, now and finally one day, when Jesus will return, must be cultivated in the minds and hearts of the διακόνοι. Honouring each other for the ministry performed in the service of the Lord is part of this cultivation and growth process and an important part of the experience of unity.
This way of ministry to and by the congregation is in stark contrast to an attitude of serving just to fulfil your duty or just out of concern about the on-going existence of the congregation or even seeking the honour that men will give.

4.3.4 All ministries are focused on drawing people to Jesus (cf. 4.2.6.2; 4.2.6.8; 4.2.6.9)

Jesus establishes his kingdom with the διακονία of his followers that are ready to sacrifice their lives in the service of their Lord. Διακονία is used by the Holy Spirit to draw people to Jesus. Serving each other and loving each other in the congregation will take place in the expectation that the Holy Spirit will use such ministry to equip and cultivate the congregation to maturity so that they can serve the world despite the dangers that lurk in giving yourself to unbelieving people. The congregation must be equipped to the point that they live their lives because of the conviction that power of God will be manifested when they are ready to be crucified, disclosing the love of Jesus. The Holy Spirit will use the διακονία of the congregation to conquer (some of) the evil in the congregation wherever they live. The congregation must be ready to serve and give themselves in the expectation that God will use their ministry to draw people to Jesus.

4.3.5 Ministry is a celebration of the victory of Jesus (cf. 4.2.6.5; 4.2.6.6)

The certainty of the victory that Jesus anticipated, according to John 12:31, is the starting-point of the διακονία of the followers of Jesus. The gifts that He bestows on his church are gifts of accomplished victory. Using these gifts in the ministry the church is celebrating his victory and the love, which made the victory possible. The members must be trained to live up to their identity as victors with Jesus. They have to know that they do not have to accomplish the victory – Jesus did that. They only have to use the gifts to serve so that it may become clear that the victory is being accomplished. The διακονία of the followers of Jesus is the weapon they are using to drive back the enemy and broaden the reign of their King to whom was given all the might in heaven and on earth. The liturgy of the worship service must always be a celebration of the victory of Jesus to prepare the congregation for the liturgy of life where they will also celebrate his and their own victory by serving each other and the
world. Διακονία to the διάκονοι means to follow Jesus in his victory thereby conquering over self-centredness and unbelief.

Διακονία flows from the conviction that I am a διάκονος, sent by Jesus to serve Him in love. Through God’s providence, there may come a time (an hour) that places the follower of Jesus before the choice either to try to save him- or herself or to be obedient and serve God whatever the consequences may be. By choosing to be obedient, the victory of Jesus is celebrated. Wherever equipping of God’s people happens, there they have to be brought to confirm this choice in their hearts and minds. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the διάκονοι of Jesus will discern the specific hour in their lives and what God asks of them in that hour.
Chapter 5

The use of the διακον- word group in 1 Corinthians 12: The ministry of the child in the congregation

Synopsis

In this chapter, the place of the child in the διακονία of the congregation is investigated. In the first place, the previous and current situation in theological research on children is discussed. Then the following four questions are answered: What is a child? Should a child be part of the διακονία of the congregation? What is the place of a child in the διακονία of the congregation? How can a child be welcomed to the διακονία of the congregation? The question ‘What is a child?’ is answered from the view of children in Biblical times and from a covenantal point of view. The other three questions are answered through exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12. In the exegesis, the structure of 1 Corinthians is given to establish the place of 1 Corinthians 12 within the letter. Then the structure of 1 Corinthians 12 is investigated. From the exegesis, the last questions are answered.43

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter of the study, the place of the child in the διακονία of the congregation according to the Bible will be investigated. Through the ages, children were valued, ignored, exploited or undervalued in different societies (Castells 2000:263). Today, with the globalisation process children are more and more socially excluded. Jensen (2005:xiii) says, ‘Children’s voices often drown in the cacophony of commercialization and violence that characterize the (post)modern world.’ Bunge (2008:xv) states that children have generally been overlooked in theological research (cf. Miller-McLemore 2003:xxii). Sims (2005) formulates this problem as follows:

43 Parts of this chapter have been published in two different publications. The first is ‘Welcoming children to the diakonia of the congregation’ (Breed 2016a), which is a chapter in the publication Theologies of childhood and the children of Africa by J. Grobbelaar and G. Breed; the second is the article ‘Entrance into the covenantal space as point of departure for the liturgical act of living the baptismal life in this world’ (Breed & De Wet 2012). From the article, only material from the contribution of Breed was used.
Children generally have not been viewed as active agents in the process of interpreting, constructing, negotiating and defining their relationships, societies, cultures, families and churches. Theologically they have not been viewed as active, formative agents in their relationships with God, others, themselves, society and culture, but rather as passive recipients of formation for such relationships or as young, immature sinners in need of conversion. (p. 11)

During the twenty-first century, awareness started to develop in children as a lens through which to read the Bible (DeVries 2001:162; Bunge 2006:551). Bunge (2012) writes:

I am also an historical theologian, and I have noticed in the fields of theology and ethics there is little serious theological reflection directly on children or parenting. Many theologians and ethicists have treated the subject of children as ‘beneath’ the serious theologian and as a subject only for religious educators or youth pastors. (p. 4)

Mark DeVries (2004:21) describes the ‘traditional youth ministry’ as ‘the isolation of teenagers (and children) from the adult world and particularly from their own parents’. Migliore (2014:11) asks the following question: ‘Are the proclamation and practice of the community of faith true to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as attested in Scripture?’ The church should answer the question about what the revelation of God, made known in the Bible, means for the practice of ministry to, by and through children.

This chapter of the study is an attempt to address the above-mentioned challenge to use sound exegesis to provide an answer to the question about the position of the child in the ministry of the church.

The research question of this chapter is the following: What should the διακονία of a child entail? Questions that flow from this main question are:

- What is a child?
- Should a child be part of the διακονία of the congregation?
- What is the place of a child in the διακονία of the congregation?
- How can a child be welcomed to the διακονία of the congregation?
The exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12 will be a core part of this chapter but other passages will also be considered.

First, the question ‘What is a child?’ will be answered by taking cognisance of two perceptions, namely the perception of a child in Biblical times and then the perception of a child according to the covenant of God. Closely connected with the latter is the question how a child should be equipped to enter the covenant space into which he was born. The goal of the equipment is that he can truly confess Jesus as Lord and in that way live as part of the body of Christ and use his gifts to build up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:2, 3). The last three questions will be answered based on the results of a structural (narrative) discourse and semantic analysis of 1 Corinthians 12 in the context of the whole of the letter. Other parts of Scripture will also be used to answer questions that arise from the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12.

5.2 What is a child?
In this study, a child is seen as a person under the age of 12 years.

5.2.1 A child in Biblical times
According to the Jewish law, the moral consciousness of a child is developed enough at the age of 12 to be held legally responsible (Dorff 2012:30; cf. Grobbelaar 2008:204, 205). Grobbelaar (2008:291) describes the cultural background within which the witness of the New Testament should be understood. It was the time when the Hellenistic and Jewish social and cultural contexts met. To create a monolithic view of childhood of those times is not possible. Botha (1999:316) says that because of non-Jewish influences on Jewish culture, the Jewish family was not so much different in structure, ideals and dynamics from families of other Mediterranean cultures (cf. also Balla 2003:109). Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003) say about the view of children in those times:

[A] minor, a child was on a par with a slave, and only after reaching maturity was he/she a free person who could inherit the family estate. The orphan was the stereotype of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society. The term ‘child/children’ could also be used as a serious insult (cf. Mt 11:16–17; Lk 7:32).

(p. 336)
Overall, children were not seen as very important in the time of the New Testament. The Jews rejected many of the brutal practices towards children (see Gundry-Volf 2001:35–36). According to Jewish law, children were not only ‘an obligation’, they were a ‘blessing’ (Dorff 2012:23). According to the Bible, children are ‘gifts from God and sources of joy’, they are developing persons in need of instruction and guidance, they are human beings made in the image of God, and as Bunge (2012:62–66) states, ‘Models of faith and sources of revelation’. The New Testament shows a deeper respect for children than the prevailing views in those times (Grobbelaar 2008:291). Davies and Allison (1997:35) say that the conduct of Jesus towards children re-interpreted the view of the child and childhood. The way Jesus treated children, according to the gospels, shows that they were important to Him as He fed them with the adults (Matt. 14:13–21), He healed them (Matt. 15:21–28), and He used them as examples to be followed by his disciples (Matt. 18:3). In a crucial moment of the ministry of Jesus, the children come to the fore and recognised Jesus as the Son of David, shouting ‘Hosanna’ to him. ‘They are objects of Jesus’ mercy. They are to be imitated. And they can receive miraculous insight’, Davies and Allison conclude (1997:35).

5.2.2 Child in the covenantal space
The way the church think about the child is reflected in the way they minister to the child (Wyse 2004:211). Children were neglected or limited to a few aspects of the ministry in ministry and research for a long time. Children should be fully integrated into the ministry of the church and research should establish a well-founded theology of children from which a sound ministry can be deduced (Dean 2010:25–42; Breed & Kruger 2014; Grobbelaar 2008:139–190; Bunge 2001:1–28; Strommen & Hardel 2000).

The fact that a child has been baptised (according to the Reformed perspective) has an influence on how the church should think about children as part of the congregation’s ministry. In 1 Corinthians 12:2–3, Paul states the contrast between the congregation’s previous lifestyle as Gentiles and their current confession that Jesus is Lord. Nobody who is led by the Spirit of God can say that Jesus is cursed and nobody can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.
It cannot be assumed that every child that is baptised is led by the Holy Spirit. Before we investigate the διακονία of children according to 1 Corinthians 12, it is important to ask how a child should be equipped to come to the true confession of Jesus as Lord under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That should also answer the question how the church should view the child in their midst.

Nobody can respond to God’s promises sealed in baptism without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Infant baptism presupposes the working of the Spirit through the education of parents and teachers in the life of the baptised person. Jesus connected baptism and teaching inseparably with each other in his great command to his disciples (Matt. 28:19–20).

The question we attempt to answer in this section, deals with how the church – through its teaching and actions – can be the best instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead the baptised to live in a covenantal relationship with God and his people. In this relationship, they can experience the identity-forming and transformative power that is signified, sealed and promised in their baptism and use their gifts inside and outside the church. In order to guide a person in the art of living abundantly on the grounds of the promises of his/her baptism within the intimate space of the covenant, the essence of that space should be known. By answering the question about the essence of the covenantal space, we will also be able to answer the question about the identity of a child in the church.

When you know what the covenantal space is you will be able to address the question regarding educating the child to live in this space. By getting to know what the covenantal space is, you will gain insight into what you receive in this space and what you ought to do and be because you are in this particular space.

5.2.2.1 Entering into the covenantal space is entering a space into which you are already imbedded

God created the covenantal space. God made the covenant with Abraham and through Christ with every believer and his or her children (Gal. 3; Chapel 2003:11). Christ made the creation of this space possible by his atoning work. The Holy Spirit creates a new space, a new life, inside the human being. This life will make it possible for that person to live with joy in the covenantal space. Infants of believing parents – as Reformed theology sees it – are already part of the covenant from the
moment of conception. All the promises of the covenant are theirs (Wilson 2003:293) as they are in a covenant relationship with God. The child has no choice in it and there is no escape from this disposition for the rest of his life. Baptism seals this relationship with the sign of water. The situation of the child can be compared to a child born to certain parents. The child can feel at home in the space shared with the parents. He is not treated as if he does not belong there. In the same way, covenantal space is not an unfamiliar country that must still be conquered. It is also not a space that can be put behind you as if you never partook in it. Once God has made his covenant with you, it is a lifelong covenant from his side. All a child of the covenant can do is to accept or reject God’s attentions and promises, but the promises of God cannot be undone (Brueggemann 2001:83). Brueggemann (1999:1–17) speaks of God as the ‘other’ in the human’s life. ‘This “other”’, he says, ‘is an endlessly inscrutable mystery and endlessly problematic to us, for we can neither escape from that other, nor are we able to seduce, capture, or possess that other who always stands from and over against us’ (p. 1). Baptism is a token and seal that this ‘other’ chose you to be part of his covenant. It is a token of the lengths to which He went to make it possible for you to live in the closest covenantal relationship with Him and his people. With the commitment of God comes his demand that you should give your whole life to Him. In this regard, a baptised child has no choice. He/she is in the covenantal space. The psalmist was stricken by this fact when he wrote these words:

    LORD, you have examined me and you know me. Where can I go from your Spirit, or where can I flee from your presence? I ascend to heaven, you are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. (Ps. 139:1, 7, 8)

For the baptised to experience the identity-forming and transformative power, which is possible in this space, he must know the God with whom he is connected by the covenant. Heitink (2007:299) says, ‘Godskennis is een wijze van kennen die opkomt uit een zich gekend weten’ (freely translated into English: ‘The knowledge of God flows from the knowledge that you are known’). This way of knowing asks from you to open yourself to the transcendental reality, which exists imperceptibly behind our reality, so that it for a moment can sometimes, be experienced as a perception of being known.
Dean (2010) discusses the research of the National Study of Youth and Religion in America. The results show that the churches under scrutiny in the survey taught their youth a feel-good therapeutic gospel that does not ask anything of the individual. The young people say they do not have a problem with the gospel and God, but it is also clear from the survey that they do not feel much for God and do not know much about Him. People can be indifferent to God only because the church allows them to be.

The church must teach a God that cannot be escaped, a God that comes to you in your baptism with his love and his promises. You have to either reject Him or love Him but you cannot ignore Him. Van der Merwe (2004:136) calls baptism drowning of the child, because baptism calls for dying in yourself to be resurrected by the Spirit in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20).

The church must teach Jesus Christ as the One on whom you either build your life or find him to be an obstacle and a stone that crushes you (1 Pet. 2:6, 7). The church must teach and live in such a way, that nobody can stay indifferent. The uncompromised message of being baptised must be that ‘you are in the covenant space by the grace of God, live in that space with your whole heart, mind and strength.’ (Robbins 2004:121). It must be impossible for an onlooker to be in the presence of the people of God and not meet God or see the fear of the Lord in their lives. Everything the church do must be a proclamation of God as He makes Himself known in Scripture and the covenant (Robbins 2004:121).

The second aspect of covenant space that is important for the church to help the baptised in unlocking and sustaining the identity-forming and transformative power of their baptism is to know and experience the nature of the covenantal space as discussed in the following sections:

5.2.2.2 Covenantal space is a familial space (p. 98)
5.2.2.3 Covenantal space is a charismatic and diaconal space (p. 100)
5.2.2.4 Covenantal space is a space of growth (p. 100)
5.2.2.5 Covenantal space is representative of unfinished business (p. 101)
5.2.2.6 Covenantal space is a space of celebration (p. 102)
5.2.2.2 Covenantal space is a familial space

When God made the covenant with Abraham, he said that He would be a God to him and his children. From the start, the covenant was closely associated with the household of parents including their siblings and descendants. God even commanded Abraham to circumcise his whole household (Gen. 17:12). Chapel (2003) calls the incorporation into the covenantal status of the parent the representative principle and comments:

The representative principle also explains why, in the New Testament, the apostle Paul could still say that children of a believing parent – even one who is married to a non-believer – are ‘holy’ before God (1 Cor. 7:14). (p. 13)

God gives his covenant promises to every believer. When that believer has children, those children are partakers of the covenant. God pledges all the blessings of the covenant to the believer and his children when the condition of faith is met. Furthermore, everyone that partakes in the covenant is also part of the holy nation of God. This implies that the education of the Christian community is a family business. In order to partake in the blessings of the sacrament of Holy Baptism in a way that culminates in constantly realising and living up to the sacramental implications of your baptism, you have to be part of the people of God (Heitink 2007:158). What the covenant blessings amount to and how the member of the Christian community can experience these blessings as a reality in his life, are best taught and learned in the loving relationship of a family and in the community of saints. As an example, it can be stated the relationship of a new-born baby with his mother proves to be all-important for the development of his relationship with God. If the baby experience unconditional love from his mother, knowing that she is there for him when he needs her, it will be easier for him to believe in an almighty God who is his Shepherd (Montanaro 1994:17–25). If he also learns to respect and obey his parents – even if he does not understand the logic behind their decisions – it will prepare him to serve the God of the covenant, who asked from Abraham to sacrifice his son. If he learns to respect his parents but at the same time has the freedom to talk to them about his pain and his need he will be able to, while he fears the Lord, draw near to Him with boldness (Heb. 10:19–25). If he learns that his parents will not accept bad behaviour but that they will forgive him, he will more likely be able to understand the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ and the demand of God to be holy as He is holy.
(Brueggemann 1999:3–6). If he learns to serve other, seeing his parents serve others, it is a preparation for him to be able to give himself as an offering to God (Rom. 12:1). Strommen and Hardel (2000:85) say that values are communicated most powerfully by parents. The power of a peer group’s influence ‘emerges as dominant only when the relationship of love with parents is vastly diminished’.

What we are saying is that the Holy Spirit can use healthy covenant family relationships to prepare a child for his relationship with God. A church that want to live up to the covenantal relationship as it is sealed in baptism, have to incorporate a ministry that promotes healthy families. Families must actively be guided in areas like the following: parental harmony, effective communication, wise parental control and parental nurturing (Strommen & Hardel 2000:37–71).

The same is true for relationships in the congregation. The congregation must be a family. Strommen and Hardel (2000:158) list eight factors that make congregations a family: a hospitable climate, inspirational worship, a caring environment, a thinking climate, families who help families, an emphasis on prayer, intergenerational service efforts and a sense of mission. A congregation that sets its target to be a family in this way will make constant entrance into the covenantal space as a natural part of their baptismal life. If this is done in obedience to God, both those who are on the receiving side and those who are ministering to them will be fulfilling the purpose of God with his covenant. This will bring hope to both the receiving and ministering sides and the anticipation of the work of the Holy Spirit in all of them. The church must know what it is, namely the covenant family of God, the church must do what it is, and the church must organise what it does. In this way, entering the covenantal space must be communicated as being part of the baptismal life of the church and not as if it amounts to a sporadic event. Pickard (2009) formulates this fact as follows:

The people of God do not decide of their own accord to operate in a collaborative manner. The ecclesia is, by virtue of being the body of Christ, a collaborative entity. … As a result, when the Church acts in a collaborative manner it actualises its own deepest reality. (p. 6)

The child should be ministered to as part of the family of God and the child’s own family.
5.2.2.3 *Covenantal space is a charismatic and diaconal space*

When God made the covenant with Abraham, He communicated the essence of the gospel to him saying, ‘Through you all nations will be blessed (Gal. 3:8). This blessing to the nations culminated in Jesus Christ and his sending the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended to heaven as king, he gave gifts to his Church so that they could be a blessing to the nations (Eph. 4:7, 8). Each believer received a gift through the grace of God and as good servant-managers of the grace of God they must serve others with their gifts (1 Pet. 4:10). Jesus gave certain specialised gifts to equip members of the congregation for their service in his kingdom (Eph. 4:11–13).

Equipping every member for a special task must be a priority in the congregation. The structure of the congregation’s ministry has to make it possible for every member to use his or her gift. In this way, the congregation will spread the love and grace of God according to their baptismal calling.

It also defines the congregation as a missional body. Jesus, who came to fulfil the covenant, also came to seek and to find those who are lost. The task of the congregation is to find the proverbial sheep that belong to the herd that Jesus purchased for his Father (John 10). A Spirit-filled congregation, orientated towards service, can expect to experience the mighty deeds of God in the covenantal space of which their baptism gives testimony.

5.2.2.4 *Covenantal space is a space of growth*

The members of the body of Christ can only grow to full maturity by being equipped for their ministry and by ministering to each other and the people outside the congregation (Eph. 4:7–16). The covenant people of God have received all that are necessary for them to live and to serve God, therefore they must do everything to grow in their faith so that they can live joyously in the kingdom of Christ (2 Pet. 1:3–11). Because the covenant people were regenerated by the Word of God, they must grow in their love for each other (1 Pet. 1:22–23). In Hebrews 6:1–12, the congregation are warned that anybody who receives the grace of God in many ways but does not respond by producing fruit, becomes worthless and that God will judge him. Jesus said that those who hear the Word of God and do not respond to it would lose the little that they have. However, those that receive the Word, keep it in their hearts and serve God with their lives, will accumulate more and more knowledge.
(Luke 8:18). You can only experience the covenantal gifts of God when you constantly grow in your knowledge, your love and your ministry to God and your neighbour.

Brueggemann (2001:83) says that in Deuteronomy 6:4 (‘Hear Israel YHWH is one’), the addressed group is ‘always being formed, re-identified, and reconstituted as the Israel of God, for Israel becomes Israel through hearing’. The imperative ‘hear’ is fundamental to a covenantal understanding of the people of God. In his second letter, Peter affirms the statement saying, ‘And so I will always remind you of these matters, even though you already know them and are firmly grounded in the truth you have received’ (2 Pet. 1:12). The congregation can only live in the covenantal space by hearing the truths of God repeatedly. If the Word of God is constantly applied to the lives of the congregants in sermons and by means of teaching the sound doctrine, they will be firmly grounded in the truth. If they continuously meet the God of the covenant, they will not forget their identity.

A congregation should have various opportunities to grow in their knowledge of God as He is revealed in his Word. Through the ministry of teaching, the child must be consciously led into the covenantal understanding of the space they find themselves in at the specific moment in their lives.

5.2.2.5 Covenantal space is representative of unfinished business

In this life, there will always be something incomplete concerning our relationship with God and each other. Entering and re-entering the covenant space, understanding and trying to understand, enjoying and grieving the consequences of being in the covenant space in full, will always be part of our life with God on this earth. Paul says he finds in himself the desire to do good, but he is still sinning (Rom. 7:21–23), and despite all his knowledge of Christ, he is still stretching out to take hold of this knowledge (Phil. 3:10–12).

The believer always senses that he/she belongs to the covenant space. The process of entering and re-entering the covenant space will be consummated on the day of the second advent of Jesus Christ. As covenant people, we are always looking forward to that day when we will fully experience the grace of God that He intended for us in his covenant.
A South African poet renowned for his role in the first Afrikaans Bible translation, J.D. du Toit (Totius), once said, ‘Die wêreld is ons woning nie’ (free English translation: ‘The world is not our home’). Our baptism seals the fact that we have another home with our Father in heaven. Entering the covenantal space in this life and enjoying the presence of our Lord, will always awaken the anticipation for another day when we will enjoy this privilege in a much deeper sense and will make us expect the day of eternal perfection. This vision on identity should be part of the church’s view of their children and they should build it into the worldview of children.

5.2.2.6 Covenantal space is a space of celebration

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that entering the covenantal space is a matter of remembrance, a matter of living up to that remembrance and a matter of making the consequences of that remembrance a reality in your life. Remembrance and living up to the remembrance create experiences that confirm the truth of the covenantal promises and that in its part creates anticipation of more to come. Covenantal space is a space that should be remembered by celebration. God gave Israel various feasts to celebrate the covenant relationship. Pious Jews tried to get to Jerusalem at least for the annual festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles in accordance with the Law (Exod. 23:17; Beckwith 1978:42). In the new covenant, the two sacraments of the Holy Communion and Holy Baptism, which were instituted by Christ, are occasions for celebration. However, there are more opportunities to celebrate the faithful covenantal acts of God, thus being reminded of the rejuvenatory newness of life that flows from the redemptive acts of God. A congregation can celebrate significant redemptive historical events like the birth, death and resurrection of Christ, his ascension and Pentecost. They can use the liturgical acts involved in commemorating these events as opportunities to bring the covenantal relationship between them and God into remembrance. A family can celebrate each member’s date of baptism year after year calling into memory all that their baptism entails. In addition, when a member comes to the point of confession of his Christian faith in the midst of the congregation, the newness of life that flourishes in the covenantal space can be a cause for the celebration.

To celebrate the covenant and to be part of the grace promised in the covenant is part of the identity of a baptised child.
5.3 Conclusion
Before a congregation can involve children in the διακονία, it is important for them to understand who the covenant child is in the eyes of God and how that child should be guided to accept the promises of God that are sealed in his baptism and to come to the confession of Jesus as Lord.

The grace promised in the covenant, sealed in baptism, claimed by faith, should now be distributed by διακονία. 1 Corinthians 12 tells more about it. This chapter from the New Testament will now be investigated for guidelines on how a child can be involved in the διακονία of the congregation. Where necessary, other parts of Scripture will also be studied to expand some of the guidelines found in 1 Corinthians 12.

5.4 The structure of 1 Corinthians
It is important to understand the overall structure of a book in order to position oneself in terms of the book as well as the section under discussion. One should understand what the whole contributes to understanding a specific section and what the section contributes to understanding the whole (Du Toit 2009b:226–259). The structure of 1 Corinthians is illustrated in the schematic presentation in Figure 16: Structure of 1 Corinthians (Goede 2004:182) (p. 104). 1 Corinthians 12 is part of a smaller unit of the book, comprising chapters 11–14, as indicated in this figure.

The congregation of Corinth, as every congregation, was made up of broken people, some of them saved and others still under the rule of sin. The reality of sin is still part of the reality of being a Christian. In the Corinth congregation, there was mutual rivalry. Members fought about whose leader they deemed best and who had the most important gifts (1 Cor. 1:10–13). They allowed gross immorality within the congregation (1 Cor. 5:1). Some thought themselves better than the rest and treated the poor uncharitably during communal meals (1 Cor. 11:20–22). They treated Paul disrespectfully and doubted his apostleship because he was, in their view, an unimpressive figure (1 Cor. 4:1–21). This situation induced some members to write to Paul and to ask him questions (1 Cor. 1:11; 7:1). 1 Corinthians mainly consists of Paul’s answers to these questions (Kok 2012:1–3).
Figure 16: Structure of 1 Corinthians (Goede 2004:182)

Thiselton (2000:900) says that the central theme of the letter to the Corinthians is that you may not elevate yourself above others, that you may not say that you will never need anyone else and that the stronger members should accommodate and help the weaker ones. He comments on 1 Corinthians 11:2–14:40 saying, ‘This whole section (11:2–14:40) takes up, in turn, the theme of “respect for others” which characterizes Paul’s demand and plea for “the strong” to put themselves in a position of understanding and respect for “the weak” in 8:1–11:1’ (p. 900). Furthermore, he draws the attention to Paul’s main message to the congregation saying, ‘The church
of God ceases to be the church if it remains no longer characterized by an inclusive mutuality and reciprocity’ (p. 900). Thiselton continues (p. 900) by referring to Barth, who states that the unity of the letter centres on the contrast between glorifying God, and revelling in your own faith in God or your leader or experiences and gifts. The attitude described in 3:21 and 1:31 stands in contrast to the attitude of boasting your own achievements. Largely, 1 Corinthians deals with the inclusivity that should exist within the church of Christ. It is clear that 1 Corinthians addresses the subject of welcoming.

The attention will now be on 1 Corinthians 12, which will be studied using discourse analysis. Du Toit (2009:226–259) describes discourse analysis thoroughly and indicates the advantages of the method for the exegesis of the New Testament.

5.5 1 Corinthians 12

The structure of the whole chapter is presented in Figure 18: Structure of 1 Corinthians 12 (p. 106). At first, it must be noted that 1 Corinthians 12 is part of the smaller unit in 1 Corinthians made up of 1 Corinthians 11–14 (see again Figure 16: Structure of 1 Corinthians (Goede 2004:182), p. 104), which focuses on the worship service. It is simultaneously part of the still smaller unit made up of chapters 12–14, which deals with the utilisation of spiritual gifts. Goede (2004:183) presents the broad outline of the composition of 1 Corinthians 12–14 as shown in Figure 17: Structure of 1 Corinthians 12–14 (Goede 2004:183).

The first principle

12:1-31 The Spirit gives a variety of gifts to the benefit of all

In practice

13:1-13 The gifts should be used in love

The second principle

14:1-40 The gifts should be used for the edification of the body

Figure 17: Structure of 1 Corinthians 12–14 (Goede 2004:183)

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44 1 Cor. 3:21: ‘Wherefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours.’ (ASV)
45 1 Cor. 1:31: ‘... that, according as it is written, He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord.’ (ASV)
Figure 18: Structure of 1 Corinthians 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:1</td>
<td>The matter he is going to address, namely spiritual things/people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:2, 3</td>
<td>The test of true spirituality: The confession that Jesus is the Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:4-6</td>
<td>The relationship between three spiritual things: gifts, services and powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:4</td>
<td>Variety of gifts, the same Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:5</td>
<td>Variety of services, the same Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:6</td>
<td>Variety of powerful works, the same God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:7</td>
<td>Transitional sentence: To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (ESV).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12:4 Variety of gifts, the same Spirit) 12:8-10</td>
<td>List of gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:11</td>
<td>Transitional sentence: All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills (ESV).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12:5 Variety of ministries, the same Lord) 12:12</td>
<td>Christ is like a body, many members, yet one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:13</td>
<td>The reason why a diverse group can be one: Baptised in the Spirit into one body, all saturated by one Spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:14-17</td>
<td>Motivation of the variety: The body needs every unique part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:18-20</td>
<td>Transition: God placed the members as He wanted them. There cannot be a body with only one member. There are many members and only one body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:21-24</td>
<td>The members cannot deny that they need each other. Even the weakest member is indispensable. The most unattractive parts should be covered with the greatest of care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:25, 26</td>
<td>The unity of the body is preserved by the way the members care for each other. They suffer with each other and rejoice with each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:27</td>
<td>Transitional sentence: Now you are the body of Christ and individual members of the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12:6 Variety of powerful works, the same God) 12:28-30</td>
<td>List of gifts with the emphasis on foundational and equipping gifts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.1 Theme

Chiu (2007:236–238) indicates that 1 Corinthians 12:1 reveals the subject on which Paul will teach in chapters 12–14. In this verse, τῶν πνευματικῶν can mean either ‘spiritual gifts’ or ‘spiritual people’. He (Chiu 2007:236) points out that the question whether πνευματικῶν (12:1) is male or neutral should not be all that important, since all people that have the Spirit of God will have spiritual gifts.\(^{46}\) The fact that Paul uses the word χαρισμάτων (gifts) rather than πνευματικῶν in verse 4 indicates that he wants to shift the attention from practising gifts that emphasise personal achievements to practising gifts as the grace that comes from God. The body of Christ is a body of grace, a servant of grace (Thiselton 2000:930).

5.5.2 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 within the structure of 1 Corinthians 12

It is important to note the position of 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 within the structure of 1 Corinthians 12. Some researchers feel that these verses only serve as an introduction to the chapter. In emulation of Hays (2011:207), Harrington (1999:449) and Thiselton (2000:449), these three verses are here seen as an announcement of the structure of the chapter. Verse 4 introduces the subject of the χαρισμάτων, which is discussed further in verses 8–10. Verse 7 is a transitional verse.

Verse 5 introduces the subject of the διακονίων (services) and it is discussed further in verses 12–26. Verse 11 is a transitional sentence. Verse 27 is a transitional sentence as well. The subject of the ἐνεργημάτων (effective workings) is announced in verse 6 and discussed at length in verses 28–30. Verse 31 is a transitional sentence to chapter 13.

Verses 7 and 8, together with verses 28–30, form an inclusion that binds the verses together into a chapter, with verses 1–6 as an introduction (also see Thiselton 2000:929).

\(^{46}\) Cf. Erikson (1998:210), who sees the word play as intentional, because Paul did not favour a direct attack on those who described themselves as spiritual.
5.6 Should a child be part of the διακονία of the congregation?

An important question to ask is if all that is said in 1 Corinthians 12 is applicable to children. The question about the necessity of every member in the congregation is convincingly answered in verses 22–24:

22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honourable we bestow the greater honour, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it.

In these verses, Paul deals with those people in the congregation that can be seen as weaker than the rest for some or other reason. He compares the people in the congregation with the parts of a body. He says that there are parts of our body that we do not show in public. We cover those parts with greater care than those that do not need cover because they are essential to the body. The weaker parts are essential to the congregation and the members who cannot claim any glory should be treated with greater care than those who do not need such care. This links up with the teaching of Jesus to his disciples when they tried to keep the children from approaching Him (Mark 10:13–16). He admonished them, received the little children and blessed them. More than that, He held them as an example of how the kingdom should be received. Jesus welcomed the little children who had no claim to be received by Him and He then showed how important they were in the kingdom. Children can easily be overlooked when ministering in a congregation. For instance, when there is trauma in a family, only the parents receive pastoral guidance. The children are left to their own devices. When congregants are equipped for ministry, children are mostly not involved. Children, like other vulnerable groups, should receive special ministry according to the plan of God for his congregation. It correlates with the parable of Jesus of the farmer who left ninety-nine sheep in the pen to go and search for the one sheep that was lost. 1 Corinthians 12 therefore clearly addresses the child’s place within the διακονία of the congregation. Makant (2012:2) says the care of children should be part of the DNA of a congregation.

It is important here to mention a principle stated in 1 Corinthians 11 concerning the use of the Eucharist. According to 1 Corinthians 11:28, anybody who uses the
Eucharist must examine (δοκιμάζω) him-/herself before he/she participates in it. The test is to establish if he understands what the Eucharist means and if he lives according to the life of Christ, according to the grace someone receives when symbolically eating the body of Christ and drinking his blood. Verse 29 says somebody who takes part in the Eucharist should be able to discern (διακρίνω) the meaning of what he is doing. When speaking about children as part of the ministry of the congregation. This should also be kept in mind. The child is still growing mentally and should only be involved in the ministry as far as he can readily understand what he is doing.

1 Corinthians 12:22–24 can be applied to children because they can be seen as part of the weaker limbs of the body, which can easily be overlooked when work has to be done and when special care has to be given.

5.7 The place of a child in the διακονία

An analysis of verses 4–6 shows that there are different emphases in these verses. In the first place, the unity and variety of gifts, ministries and powerful work are emphasised. Although there are a variety of gifts, ministries and powerful work, these things are brought together by the fact that the triune God is the origin of everything. The Spirit works the gifts in every believer (12:4). Christ is the commander and the leader in the διακονία (12:5). The Father is the one who ensures powerful work (12:6a). The Triune God empowers everything in everyone (12:6b). Strommen and Hardel (2000:289) say that there should be a shift in thought regarding the ministry. Ministry should not be seen as something that a person should do, but as the ministry of the Triune God. This viewpoint ties in with 1 Corinthians 12:6, which says that God establishes everything in everyone.

There are lists of gifts of the Spirit in various places in the New Testament, for example Romans 12:6–8, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28–30. None of them is the same. If one considers this variety together with 1 Corinthians 12:11, it is clear that there is indeed a diversity of gifts and the gifts cannot be

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47 1 Cor. 12:11 (ASV): 'All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.'
limited to those mentioned in the lists. The common factor to all the gifts is the work of the Triune God’s as described in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 and discussed above.

Looking from the perspective of a child, we can say that the Holy Spirit can give gifts to children as He will and that nobody can limit that in his own right. This is also confirmed by 1 Corinthians 12:18: ‘But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him.’ God places every member, even the child, in the body for a certain task as it pleases Him.

Children should therefore be welcomed to the ministry of God. The better children can understand the grace God has for them, the more they will be able to serve others with their gifts based on the security of God's love.

There is also a causative link between χάρισμα, διακονία and ἐνέργημα. The gifts enable ministry and when the gifts are used to serve, God works powerfully and establishes what He wants in human beings. The coherence of verses 4–6 is also very important. The other parts of Scripture that deal with spiritual gifts and the διακονία (see Ephesians 4:7–13; Rom. 12:4–8 and 1 Peter. 4:10) reveal that διακονία is made possible by the gifts given to believers through the power that God works in them (Eph. 3:20). It is furthermore clear that the special gifts of the apostle, prophet, shepherd and pastor play an activating role in equipping believers to use their gifts in their service (Eph. 4:12; Breed, 2014). Orr and Walther (1976:281) conclude, ‘Apportionments of activities refer to the execution of ministries, made possible by the gifts.’ Clark (1935) compares the different places in the New Testament where the ἐνέργει word group is used. He convincingly argues that it is a description of divine activity every time and that this activity brings victory over the evil forces. This observation links up with what is written in 1 Corinthians 12:1–6. In 1 Corinthians 12:2, 3 Paul deals with the contrast between people who are carried away by powers that are against Jesus Christ and those who act under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The first matter that Paul communicates to the Corinthians with regard to the πνευματικῶν is that the χαρισμάτων, the διακονιῶν and the ἐνεργημάτων are inextricably linked with the Triune God. Furthermore, the gifts are gifts from the Spirit, the διακονιῶν is a directive of Christ and the ἐνεργημάτων is the work of God. If believers use the gifts to serve, God
works powerfully to establish that which He wants in people and congregations (see Dean 2010:62, 63).

The child who is made part of the διακονία of the congregation experiences this dynamic process and witnesses how divine energy is freed by believers who obey the Spirit of God by using their gifts to serve Him and others. In the same way, Paul connects gifts with service in Ephesians 4:7, 11, 12. Peter overtly does the same in 1 Peter 4:10.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes the contrast between himself and those in the congregation who used their gifts to elevate themselves above others. Those people thought that they themselves could work powerful things. Paul emphasises the gifts of grace as the first step, that the result comes from God and that the directive comes from Christ and that believers should obey it in emulation of Him. Thiselton (2000:931) comments on 12:4–6, saying, 'What we are concerned with is not the phenomena in themselves, but their whence? and whither? To what do they point? ... It is not so much a matter of having a gift as of being a gift'.

In his teaching of Timothy, Paul makes the important point that it is possible for a young man to teach older people because of his calling by God and the gifts he has received:

Let no one despise your youth, but become a pattern for the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Until I come, give attention to public reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. (1 Tim. 4:12–14)

This teaching was against the convention of those times, but describes the way God wants to use everyone, even children, to serve the church.

Welcoming a child means to welcome him to the grace of God, the instruction to gain insight into the διακονία of Christ and their own calling to διακονία. They should also be welcomed to the energising work of the Triune God in people who serve and are served by the congregation. Breed and Kruger (2014:6–11) show the necessity of children, together with their parents, to become involved in the διακονία of the congregation.
Beckwith (2010:18, 19) refers to two types of education other than formal education: ‘informal education’ and ‘nonformal education’. Informal education is a lifelong process in which attitudes, values, skills and knowledge are acquired. It is acquired through daily experiences and education. Through these experiences, the child absorbs the behaviours and foundational attitudes inherent to such behaviours. Beckwith (2010:19) concludes saying, ‘This form of education permeates every area of a child’s life and cannot be regulated to a few hours a week spent learning inside the walls of a church.’

Beckwith (2010) has the following definition of nonformal education:

Nonformal education is described as any organized educational activity outside the established formal system of education that is intended to serve an identifiable learning community and learning objectives. (p. 19)

When children are led to do their διακονία with their parents and siblings, they receive informal education and training. When the church organises a project to build houses for poor people and involve the children, the children participate in nonformal education. The Barna Group 48 (2015) comes to the following findings from their research:

Millennials who remain active in church are twice as likely as dropouts to say they served the poor through their church (33% versus 14%). They are also more likely to say they went on a trip that helped expand their thinking (29% versus 16%) and more likely to indicate they had found a cause or issue at church that motivates them (24% versus 10%).

In Africa, there are many children without parents or with a single parent due to HIV/Aids and other reasons (Williamson 2003; Dimmock 2003:97). The church should welcome these children by connecting them with adult role models and creating something of a family atmosphere for them to experience what it is to serve together and to love each other. Some children are abused, addicted or neglected (LenkaBula 2002:55, 56). These children experience powerlessness and sometimes they are without hope. When they are part of a service group where they meet other

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48 ‘Barna Group (which includes its research division, Barna Research Group) is a private, non-partisan, for-profit organization under the umbrella of the Issachar Companies. Located in Ventura, California, Barna Group has been conducting and analyzing primary research to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984’ (Barna Group 2015).
people in the same dire situation as themselves, where they can experience how these people receive help to rise above their problems and they see the power of God through service, they can begin to believe that there is hope for them too.

5.8 How can a child be welcomed to the διακονία of the congregation?

From the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12 and other parts of Scripture, the question of how a child can be welcomed to the διακονία of the congregation is discussed under the following headings:

5.8.1 Welcoming a child to Jesus Christ as Lord (p. 113)
5.8.2 Welcoming a child to the uniqueness and diversity (p. 116)
5.8.3 Welcoming a child to unity in Christ (p. 117)
5.8.4 Welcoming a child to care (p. 119)
5.8.5 Welcoming a child to equipment (p. 120)

5.8.1 Welcoming a child to Jesus Christ as Lord

The very first matter that Paul addresses in his teaching on the gifts of the Spirit is the unity between the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ. The Spirit will not guide anyone to execrate Christ and no one can confess Christ as Lord except when the Spirit leads him to it (1 Cor. 12:1, 2). Paul also provides the test to establish whether someone who does something in exaltation is under the guidance of the Spirit of God or under the influence of evil forces.

The meting out of the gifts of the Spirit and διακονία is linked with the kingship of Christ in several places in the New Testament. In Ephesians 4, Christ is depicted in his triumphal procession after his victory over Satan and his forces (Breed 2014b). As conqueror-king, He shares the gifts. He hands out gifts of grace to every believer so that he or she can do their διακονία and He hands out the special gifts through which the congregation has to be equipped to perform their service. When the congregation is equipped and serves, a powerful change occurs as they grow to maturity and are prepared for the attacks of heresy. In John 12, Christ is presented in different ways as the King who would expel evil forces (Breed 2014b:4). He achieved victory by the radical method of his διακονία and glorification on the cross. He conquered by greeting his hour of glorification on the cross willingly in obedience
to the Father. He conquered by sacrificing his life as the ransom so that people from all over the world would come to Him. He conquered by means of his διακονία because He did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). He called upon his followers to share in his manner of victory. They too will conquer when they are, during the performance of their διακονία, willing to deny themselves to glorify the Father and in expectation that the Father will glorify them (Breed 2014b:2, 3). When children get to know Jesus as the Lord who rules by servitude, the one who has all the power and yet becomes the slaughtered lamb, then the Spirit of God can work in them the willingness to full surrender. They then come to understand the power of διακονία because διακονία means using the gifts of the Spirit that activate the power of God in other people’s lives.

To learn this, children need consistent and trustworthy role models. The words and deeds of the models must be determined by the confession that Jesus is Lord. In addition, children must be required to surrender completely to Jesus as Lord. It is the only way a child can be welcomed to the body of Christ. To be welcomed to Jesus as Lord is to be welcomed to the security of the covenant promises. God promised Abraham that He would be a God to him; in Christ, the believer is an heir to those promises (Gal. 3). Jesus is the Lord of the covenant in whom all the promises are fulfilled. From this knowledge flows trust and love, and from trust and love flows obedience (Ps. 78; Brown 2011:49). Children must be welcomed to see examples of trust and love flowing from obedience to Christ. They must hear the call for them to follow Christ, even if it means that they will lose their lives (John 12; Breed 2014b). Without trust and love there can be no truthful following of Jesus, and without truthful following of Jesus, there can be no real διακονία (Breed 2014b:2). Children learn this when they are served with the διακονία of Christ.

Horton (2008:160–180) describes the Gnostic beliefs of some of the American Churches today. The inner self and experience has become God in people’s lives. Christ ‘is no longer really even a distinct historical person, but has become a personal experience’ (p. 161). This conviction is accompanied by a rejection of prescriptions and dogma. A person’s own inner thoughts become his guidelines for life (Horton 2008:171). Dean (2010:65) says that a congregation’s focus should be Christ, and when this is true, they will not need arbitrary human boundaries. The
Spirit of God guides the congregation in the full truth and thus ensures that there is no relativism or legalism. Some members of the congregation of Corinth were convinced that when someone is in rapture and he or she curses Christ, it was not wrong since such a person was guided by the Spirit. Paul corrects this heresy with his words in 12:1, 2 and the rest of the chapter by describing the work of the Triune God that would activate the congregation. Mueller (2005:78) points to the fact that many young people of this generation are wandering aimlessly in the world, needing somebody to show them the way home. He says they need somebody to bridge the gap between the truths of the King, Jesus Christ, and their culture, their hurt and pain. The children and the youth of the church live in the same world and culture and can more easily bridge the gap to other children and youth. However, they first have to know and love the way (the Word of God) and the Lord of the way (Mueller 2005:130, 170–190; Robbins 2004:391–402).

The Barna Group (2015) indicates the following from their extensive research among young people:

Millennials who remain active [in church] are more likely than those who dropped out to say they believe Jesus speaks to them personally in a way that is real and relevant (68% versus 25%). Additionally, actives are much more likely to believe the Bible contains wisdom for living a meaningful life (65% versus 17% of dropouts).

In Africa, welcoming a child to Jesus as Lord can be a challenge. Children who grow up in the religion of worshipping the ancestors find it very difficult to understand the concept of one Lord and Saviour. Breed and Semenya (2015) explain:

African philosophy of ubuntu is that the spirits of the deceased still form part of the community and care must be taken to not anger the spirits of the fathers. Adversity is considered punishment for wrongdoing, and individual prosperity is seen as limiting the overall benefit to the community in that the prospering person is using more than his share. (p. 3)

The child must be led to understand that when you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you do not have to fear other spirits and that they cannot determine your life. The security of never having to fear punishment from God, and to be under the reign of Jesus Christ, who let all things work together for good, can create an environment
of peace and growth for a child. The knowledge that no spirit can touch God’s child, who lives under the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, can create a save place for a child in the church and an alternative culture without fear.

5.8.2 Welcoming a child to the uniqueness and diversity of God

Paul uses the image of a body to explain the relationship between Christ and the congregation of Corinth, as well as the mutual relationship between members. He makes two things clear: no member is dispensable and no one may say that he does not need the others. In fact, the members who look the weakest are of crucial importance to the body.

The words of 12:11 are applicable here: ‘And all these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines’, and 12:18, ‘But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, everyone of them, just as he wanted them to be’, and also 12:22, ‘On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.’

Every child in the congregation should be guided to discover his or her gifts continuously. They must understand that God placed each of them in a special place in the congregation because the other members of the congregation need them there. They must be taught that the church is like the human body that God created with body parts, each with its own purpose, but that each part needs the other parts to work as a body.

Kinnaman (2011:13) says, ‘Disciples are handmade, one relationship at a time.’ Individual attention and relationships are crucial to help children discover their identity and uniqueness in Christ. This is why Kinnaman (2011:13) says it is necessary that we ‘re-examine the substance of our relationships and the shape of or institutions.’ Every congregation will therefore have to examine whether its ministry structures serve these principles (Strommen & Hardel 2000:289).

Beckwith (2009:56) discusses the pressure on the children of the 21st century to succeed. Many children feel inferior during their teenage years because they are not part of the group of top achievers. When these children use their gifts in the church to serve others, and they experience the effects within themselves and they see these effects in others, it can counter the inferior feeling. When they experience that each person’s contribution to the growth of the body is important without it being
compared to the contributions of the others, they feel that they have value in Christ. God placed each person in the congregation as He wanted them and therefore each person is necessary and indispensable.

Children have to be guided to appreciate the wonder of the diversity of God. Verses 4–6 not only emphasise the unity between gifts, διακονία and powerful works, but also the rich diversity. The wealth of the Triune God is described in these verses. 1 Peter 4:10 has a good commentary on this rich variety: ‘As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace’ (ESV). Children are taught to value each other and not to compete with each other all the time. They praise God for the grace that He gives to other members and children in the congregation. South Africa is a multicultural country. To understand the variety of God is to learn to accept people from all cultures and races. A multicultural congregation can grow to a unity, also with their children, through understanding the plan of God with its variety. The children should be guided to accept their identity in Christ and their identity as a unique individual. They should learn to understand that their worth rests in the love and care of God, and not in what other people say about them. When they come in situations of racism or xenophobia, they will be able to resist the urge to retaliate and rather choose to serve even those that do them wrong.

The Barna group (2015) indicates that churches can deepen their relationship with their children and youth by teaching and helping them discover and live up to their vocation or calling. Paul prays according to Ephesians 1:18 that the believers should know the hope that is in their calling from God. The Barna Group (2015) has the following finding:

> Millennials who have remained active are three times more likely than dropouts to say they learned to view their gifts and passions as part of God's calling (45% versus 17%). They are four times more likely to have learned at church ‘how the Bible applies to my field or career interests’ (29% versus 7% of dropouts).

5.8.3 Welcoming a child to unity in Christ

Belonging is a special need among children and youths. Many young people have been enticed to sin, even to risk their lives, because they do not want to be rejected by the group (Mueller 2007:246, 247, 254). In 1 Corinthians 12:27, the emphasis falls
on both our unity with Christ and our being part of his body: ‘Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it’ (see also 12:12). The fact that every member has a place and function in the body and that this place and function is awarded by God himself can create space and security in which the child experiences that he/she ‘belongs’. This ‘belonging’ does not depend on the acceptance of others or the child’s achievements, but is an awarded reality that cannot be taken away. A child should be guided to make their unity with the body of Christ increasingly part of his identity as a human being. Mueller (2007:251) says that because of the fact that family structures are deteriorating, children and their parents spend less and less time together. The effect of this lifestyle is that children lack intimate contact with people whom they can trust. Mueller (2007) is of the following opinion:

So, after years of little or no family time, an entire generation of ‘baby busters’ has moved through their teenage years and into adulthood with a hunger for deep, meaningful relationships. (p. 251)

This need has to be addressed by congregations in different ways, but especially by family ministry. DeVries (2004:71–80) says the family is the primary place where the transference of faith takes place. When a family is in a crisis for whatever reason, this function is undermined. Other family members, like grandparents or uncles and aunts, might fulfil this role partially (DeVries 2004:71–88, 89; Strommen & Hardel 2000:175, 176). However, it is clear that healthy families and healthy marriages contribute to bringing children to Christ and the church. When parents are at home in the church, it opens the door for children to become at home in the church as well (Dean 2010:119,120). When other believers in the congregation also take care of and irradiate love for the child, it increases the possibility that the child will grow in his faith (Strommen & Hardel 2000:170). Dean (2010) expresses a warning saying, ‘When we attempt faith formation through programs instead of people… they hear the gospel as a wooden translation’ (see also Dean & Foster 1998:28–30).

The Barna Group (2015) indicates the following from their research about factors that contribute to youth staying active in their congregation:

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49 Veerman (1992) deals with the potential of small group ministry as part of child and youth ministry.
Those who stay are twice as likely to have had a close personal friendship with an adult inside the church (59% of those who stayed report such a friendship versus 31% among those who are no longer active). (p. 1)

5.8.4 Welcoming a child to care
Goede (2004:183,184) distinguishes four characteristics of the body of Christ as described in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. In agreement with his division, the following characteristics can be distinguished:

- 12:12, 13 – Christ is like a body with many parts that is still a whole, because we have all been baptised by the Spirit to one body, even though there are a variety of kinds of people.
- 12:14–18 – Diversity is crucial in the body, because God has designed the body in such a manner that a variety of parts complement each other.
- 12:19–24 – The diversity in the body means the members are interdependent and need each other.
- 12:25, 26 – The unity of the body is conserved by the care that the members have for each other. They suffer with each other and rejoice with each other.

1 Corinthians 12:12 and 27 clearly link up with and forms an inclusion of 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. It is only in these two verses of the section that the expression ‘body of Christ’ appears and both verses are summaries of what has been said in the other verses, namely that there is a variety of members, but only one body. 1 Corinthians 12:27 also serves as a transitional sentence to the third part of the chapter, which deals with the ἐνεργημάτων (see Figure 18: Structure of 1 Corinthians 12, p. 106). 1 Corinthians 12:25, 26⁵⁰ therefore clearly addresses the purpose of the gifts, namely that each person will not search for their own gain and thus cause division, but that the diversity of gifts will become a variety of διακονία. The division is countered by care for each other. Being part of the body children should also be part of taking care of the body. They should be taken care of according to their need and should be guided to take care of others with their gifts. When they share in the care in this manner, they will also have unity with the body.

⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 12:25–26 (ESV): ‘That there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.’
and they will come home in the body. Beckwith (2009:57) explains the concept of mutual care further saying, ‘Spiritually forming children means we help them see that in the economy of the kingdom of God being successful is loving others, showing mercy, fighting for justice, and walking humbly with God.’ Barnes (2012) writes about children with special needs and how they, together with their parents, struggle to find congregations where they are welcomed by being cared for according to their needs. She shows the advantages that it has for an entire group of children when they are guided to accommodate children with special needs.

Du Plessis (2014) did research on women in townships that care for vulnerable children. These women are called Mamas Africa. Du Plessis (p. 2) describes them as ‘examples of people who make a difference in society every day by utilising the minimum resources available. The concept Mama Africa indicates all women from all races who are making a difference in the South African society by promoting mutual bonding.’ The church can assist these women and train some of their members to take care of vulnerable or traumatised children. Dimmock (2003) writes about community-based orphan care where extended families are helped by churches to care for orphans, to educate them and integrate them into the community and church. He says about these projects that the church is the epicentre of this challenge:

Integrated, community-based childcare centres cater for the nutritional and basic health needs of all preschool children. Community grain banks and shallow wells assist in providing continuous food and clean water to the communities. Now, nearly all preschool children are participating and getting a ‘head start’ The network of trained volunteers continues to expand. (p. 98)

In this way, children can experience the love and care of Christ via other people and can find a safe welcoming place within a hostile and scary world.

5.8.5 Welcoming a child to equipment

As indicated above, 1 Corinthians 12:28–30 can be viewed as a further expansion of 1 Corinthians 12:6 (see 5.5.2, p. 107). Several commentaries do not offer a definite explanation for the ranking of apostles, prophets and pastors, or for the word ἔπειτα (‘after that’), which is followed by the different gifts. Horsley (1998:173) says that Paul’s primary focus on speaking in tongues is to show that it is inferior and for this
reason he places it last in the list. He furthermore says that Paul indicates some gifts as inferior to others by the ranking and the use of ἔπειτα. However, this explanation is contrary to what Paul indicates in the preceding verses, namely that the one gift is not more important that the others. Trail (2001:166, 167) investigates the meaning of the word πρῶτον and finds that it may be an indication of time, but also an indication of source, namely that the other gifts came forth from the work of those who were ranked (also see Louw & Nida 1989:607). The apostles did the primary foundational work, after which the prophets proclaimed the doctrine of the apostles, and after the prophets came the pastors. The three that are mentioned first (apostles, prophets and pastors) are persons who are named according to their offices, while the rest of the list refers to services. The three groups of persons indicated by their respective offices are also preceded by the words οὐς μὲν (some), similar to the way in which Paul indicates the gifts that will equip believers for their service in Ephesians 4:11 (Lenski 2008:538). When verse 28 is linked with verse 6, the ranking of the first three gifts makes sense. They are the gifts that God used and still uses to activate the other gifts. In this case, the use of ἔπειτα before the other gifts can be seen as an indication, not of order of importance, but of the sequence of the gifts that flowed from the work that the apostles, prophets and pastors did.

Children are welcomed into the congregation when the activating gifts, the gift of pastors, elders and deacons, function as people who equip the congregation. The plan of to activate the διακονία in the congregation is has to be executed by equipping the members. When members do not only hear what they have to do, but are actively and purposefully equipped for their service, they can start their work with confidence. An equipped congregation will serve each other better. Equipped marital partners will serve each other in marriage, equipped parents will serve their children, and equipped families will serve each other. Members should consciously be encouraged and equipped to minister to children as part of the weaker group of members who need special care. When members do this, each according to his own gifts, the children will experience the love and grace of God in the congregation. When children are guided to discover their own special gifts and are equipped to use it, they experience the powerful work of God in themselves and in other people.
When children are involved with the service work of God and with the congregation, they come before a choice of either being part of a body where you are cared for and take care, or withdrawing. God brings awe to those who experience Him.

Horton (2008:40–41) describes the disease of the church in America as ‘moralistic, therapeutic deism’. In this conviction, God is a harmless ‘nice guy’ who wants people to be ‘nice’ to each other so that everyone can be happy and can feel good about themselves and go to heaven when they die. However, to them God is especially not involved with what happens in your daily life, except when He has to solve a problem for you. Dean (2010:25–44) calls this the ‘Cult of Nice’. God does not demand anything from humans. Religion is meant to be of some personal advantage to people. She calls it a ‘loveless faith’ with no love for the kingdom of God, only love for the self and own advantage. In this religion, Jesus is not Lord and God, but an uninvolved provider for our needs (Dean 2010:5).

As opposed to these views, 1 Corinthians 12 directs the church to allow children to find a home in the congregations as a body. In this body Jesus is the Lord, the Spirit constitutes the body as He wants. In this body God works powerfully through his servants that use their gifts with great sacrifice, to serve others for the sake of the edification of the body.

5.9 Conclusion

Welcoming children to the διακονία of the church in the first place implies welcoming them to the ministry of the Triune God.

- The Spirit hands out the grace of God in the gifts that He gives to people according to his will. He unifies people with the body of Christ through the rebirth that is symbolised by baptism. He equips people through the special gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, elders, deacons) that He gives.
- Jesus Christ reconciled the children of God with Him through his service (διακονία) so that they can have part in the διακονία of the Triune God. He lived, died, rose from death, and thus conquered both Satan and death so that He can distribute the victory gifts, through which the believers conquer sin, Satan and his evil forces day by day. Believers are members of his body and He is their Lord, who demands that they use the gifts of grace to edify his
body. The parts of his body each have a function in the congregation and need each other. The members do not disregard anyone and realise that the members who look the weakest (like children with disabilities), are also crucial to the body. Those members who have no claim to glory and care (like children), are cared for with greater commitment. The mutual service to each other ensures that there is no division in the body.

- God the Father constitutes the body according to his perfect will. He also gives activating gifts to the congregation and works more than what humans can pray or think in and through the believers. He establishes all in everyone and uses the service of believers to accomplish it. Children who are equipped, guided and allowed to let their gifts develop into service learn about this powerful work of God and they get to know God in awe.

- Children in any unique situation can be welcomed in the church by applying the directives found in 1 Corinthians 12.
Chapter 6
Diakonia: In conversation with John N. Collins

Synopsis
The work of John N Collins on the διάκονες word group can be seen as an important contribution to the discussion on the ministry in the church. While his work receives much attention and support, there is also criticism on his exegesis to arrive at his results. If the results of his work are accepted by the churches, it will have a meaningful impact on the ministry. It is therefore important that his work be thoroughly tested. This chapter does just that by analysing Mark 10:45 in the context of the Gospel and particularly in the context of Mark 8–10. Collins’s notion that διακονία is never done out of love or compassion for other people is found wanting. An exegesis of Mark 10:45 with thorough consideration of its context shows that Mark describes Jesus’ διακονία as done out of compassion and love for people and as envoy of God. Jesus instructed his disciples to do the same, in contrast to the way of the rulers of the nation.51

6.1 John Collins’s research
The importance of John N. Collins’s research on the διάκονες word group must not be underestimated (Collins 1990; Collins 2014). Hartley (2004:379) says, ‘Collins’s research has radical implications for general Protestant assertions about the ministry of all Christians, particularly in relation to the nature of the episcopacy and an understanding of ordination.’ Clarke (2008:100) says, ‘Collins has in a large measure overturned a consensus’ about the διάκονες word group. Assessing the results of Collins’s work, Gooder (2006a) says:

Sea changes in opinion on New Testament subjects usually go unnoticed within the church. Just occasionally, however, a change takes place that has enormous impact on the life and self-understanding of people within the church – this is one of those occasions. (p. 103)

Collins (2014) says the following about the impact of his own research results:

51 Parts of this chapter have been published in the article: Diakonia: In Conversation with John N. Collins (Breed G 2017)
Working with such changed semantic parameters – and totally freed from the constricted ambit of lowly service – we will necessarily arrive at ecclesiological conclusions substantially at variance with principles espoused within the contemporary diaconic consensus. (p. 182)

It is therefore essential that Collins’ theory should be thoroughly tested to save the church a possible wrong turn in their ministry. Collins’s work has been recognised, amongst others, in Germany, America, South Africa, the UK and Finland (Benedict 2008:114–137; Eurich, Schmidt & Oelschlägel 2008; Clarke 2008; Breed 2014a; Hentschel 2007:21–23, 143; Latvus 2008:42–157). The most important acknowledgement was the use of Collins’s research results in the *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (Arndt, Danker & Bauer 2000). But his research has also attracted its fair share of criticism (Barnett 1995:20–22).

In his first book on this subject, Collins devoted a whole chapter to the discussion of Mark 10:45 (Collins 1990:46–62).\(^5^2\) He also says that 10:45 has long been reckoned ‘within ecumenical theology of ministry as the quintessential expression of what ecclesial ministry is’ (Collins 2014:26). In his first book most of the chapter on 10:45 consists of a comparison between 10:45 and Luke 22:27. A discussion of 10:45 in the context of Mark’s Gospel is absent. Throughout all his books and articles, this is the one thing that puts a question mark behind his findings; Collins does not discuss a word or verse in the context of the entire Gospel or letter in the New Testament, also his research contains no structural analysis. This article tests Collins’s findings on 10:45 by finding the place of the verse within the structure of the Gospel of Mark and thus attempting to determine what Mark and his readers had in mind when writing or reading the verse. Collins quotes Hentschel approvingly, who translates 10:45 as follows: ‘The Son of Man has not come to have tasks carried out for himself but to carry out a task himself’ (Collins 2014:26; 1992:252).\(^5^3\) He also quotes Hentschel to explain the consequence of this translation for the identity of Jesus according to 10:45: ‘In Mark 10:45a Jesus is presented neither as waiter nor as a humble neighbour-loving servant who would be motivated by such an attitude to give his life for people’ (Collins 2014:26). In his 1995 article, ‘A ministry for tomorrow’s church’,

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\(^{5^2}\) All Scripture references are references to the Gospel of Mark except where otherwise indicated.

\(^{5^3}\) It needs to be pointed out that Collins and Hentschel arrived independently at their understanding of the statement and only after extensive individual semantic investigations of a large body of ancient Greek usage.
Collins (1995:167) sums up his new interpretation of the διάκονος word group as follows: ‘Never an expression of loving service but service of one another always expressing the mandate of the subordinate from a superior’ (cf. Collins 2014a:219; Gooder 2006a:41.) It is his opinion that the precise meaning of the διάκονος word group should be gleaned from the context where it is used, but nowhere do his writings offer a detailed exegesis of Mark 10 within the structure of the Gospel and chapter (Collins 1992; cf. also Collins 2014:20). The nearest he comes to this is in his latest work (Collins 2014:79–93). He argues that Mark 10:45 should be read as a whole. He sees the καὶ (and) in the last part of the sentence as epexegetical. Thus seen, ‘giving his life as a ransom for many’ explains his ‘service’. This far we can be in agreement with him. But when he answers the question ‘who was Jesus serving?’, he disregards the context of Mark 10 to prove that his service was only to the One that sent him and not service to people, the context of 10:45 is not taken into account. Instead, as Clarke (2008:65, 66) also points out, Collins applies to 10:45 what he presumes is true of the use of the word group in other writings without testing it against the context in Mark.

One of Collins’s conclusions is tested with a detailed exegesis of Mark 8–10: this is that the διάκονος word group is ‘Never an expression of loving service’. The goal will therefore be to establish the meaning of the διάκονος word group as it is used by Mark with proper consideration of the context. The question to be answered is therefore: Does the word group (also) express loving service to other people according to Mark?

6.2 The background of Mark

For the background to the Gospel of Mark, his readers and their situation, and the time and purpose of the Gospel, see the detailed discussion by Roskam (2004). She also gives an overview of the development of the research on Mark (pp. 1–13). The discussion around the background, writer, readers and history of the text cannot be addressed in this chapter. The text is used as it appears in the Nestle-Aland text (Nestle et al. 2006).

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54 Tannehill (1982:67, 68) emphasises the importance of taking the context into consideration when establishing the meaning of a word or section of a book/letter/gospel.
To understand the meaning of the διάκον- word group as used by Mark, it is necessary to look at the context of the verses in which it occurs, as well as the themes Mark addresses in that context.

6.3 Structure of Mark

Breytenbach (1989) says about the Gospel of Mark that ‘there can hardly be any doubt that the gospel of Mark is a carefully composed text.’ He also says:

With Rhoads', Dewey’s, and Michie’s “Mark as story” appearing in a third edition in 2012, there is no need to dispute the approach that the Gospel of Mark should be heard as a narrative read to an audience, and, if 1 may add, an episodic narrative. (p. 5)

When considering the structure of Mark, it is wise to listen to the advice of Moloney (2004:19): ‘Narrative units are not separated by brick walls. One flows into the other, looks back to issues already mentioned, and hints at themes yet to come.’ Moloney (2011) says about the Gospel of Mark:

...this book showed admirably how close attention to the literary features of narrator, setting, plot, characters and reader(s) that can be traced within a narrative could lead to a fresh understanding of the Gospel of Mark as a deliberative contrived ‘whole utterance,’ a passionate and unified story that runs from 1:1 to 16:8. (p. 95)

Meyers (1986:109) says about this Gospel: ‘Every element in the story is there for a reason, which we will discover only by combing back and forth through the text until it yields its own narrative coherence.’ Witherington (2001:36–39) describes several of Mark’s techniques to build micro and macro structures and one of his widely accepted techniques in the micro structures is the following:

... the weaving together of two stories by splitting the first story in two parts to serve as a frame around the second story. Another micro structure device of Mark is the so called doublets. Mark uses two descriptions about similar things that happened or blocks of similar teachings of Jesus. He uses this as a way of leading the readers to interpret the encapsulated material. (p. 36)

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These techniques are relevant in the discussion of the meaning of the διάκονος-word group in Mark. According to this viewpoint, it therefore can be accepted that the structure of Mark 8–10 is important for the understanding of 10:42–45.

Different themes in Mark 8–10 are now discussed in greater detail to answer the research question and to work towards determining the structure of Mark 8–10 to establish the place of Mark 10:45 in the structure.

6.4 Themes in Mark 8–10

6.4.1 Envoys of God

When Jesus announces his coming passion for the first time (8:31) the word δεῖ (must) is used. He must suffer, die and rise again because that is part of God’s plan; that is part of the task that he has been sent for. This is written about Him in Scripture (9:12, 13; 14:21, 27). When Peter admonishes him, he says that Peter is thinking the things of men and not of God (Mark 8:33; Witherington 2001:241). After reprimanding Peter, he calls his disciples and the crowd and teaches them about the way of the kingdom of God, the way of the Christ (Hooker 2001:55–56). Anyone who wants to follow Jesus must do three things (8:34): The first is to deny yourself, which entails ‘the denying or saying no to the self as the determiner of one’s goals, aspirations and desires’ (Stein 2008:407). The second is to take up your cross, which means to be willing to do what God asks of you in your unique situation, even if it means crucifixion in the figurative sense. The third is to follow Jesus. The sentence starts with ‘follow’ (ἀκολουθέω) and ends with ‘follow’ (ἀκολουθέω). The first ‘follow’ includes ‘denying’, ‘crucifixion’ and the second ‘follow’. The last ‘follow’ therefore means doing the same as Jesus, living as he did; it means to turn to action. The first two requirements for somebody who wants to follow Jesus is in the aorist tense (ἀπαρνησάσθω; ἀράτω), but the last ‘follow’ is in the present imperative (ἀκολουθείτω), pointing to an ongoing process. Following Jesus is a lifelong journey. The sentence can be paraphrased as: If you want to follow me, then ‘get in line’ with me and do it throughout your whole life by not living by your own desires, goals and aspirations, but be ready to give up everything to obey God (Witherington 2001:243). With this teaching Jesus describes his followers as his envoys who should represent Him and his way with every detail of their lives no
matter the cost to them. ‘The exhortation means that the disciple gives up his right to his own life up-front’ (Witherington 2001:245). Mark 8:38 proceeds with the explanation of what it means to follow Jesus, i.e. not to be ashamed of Jesus and his words. It is clear language of an envoy. Jesus is calling his followers to be his envoys in this world; to remove everything that can prevent them from being that (Henderson 2006:4). If they do not represent Jesus and are ashamed of Him and his words, they will lose their lives because Jesus will not be their representative before the Father (8:36–38).

Mark 8:31–38 is semantically connected to 10:42–45. In both passages Jesus asks of his disciples to deny themselves and to follow Him. Both follow after Jesus’ announcement of his coming death and the misunderstanding of the disciples. In 8:37 the question is asked what somebody can give as ransom for his life. The question is answered in 10:45 when Jesus says that he will give his life as ransom for many (see Figure 19: Schematic presentation of the structure of Mark 8–10, p. 138).

6.4.2 Mercy and receptiveness
Mercy and receptiveness play a decisive role in 8:1–10:52 (see Moloney 2004:172). In this part, Mark uses doublets and repetition as techniques. In 8:2 Jesus says to his disciples ‘I have compassion (σπλαγχνίζομαι) on the crowd’ this section (episode) of Mark’s Gospel ends with Barthimaeus calling repeatedly to Jesus to have mercy (ἐλεέω) on him (10:47, 48). Mark thus puts this whole part in the frame of compassion and mercy. This is confirmed by his technique of repetition. Three times in this part Jesus announces his coming suffering (8:31; 9:31; 10:33, 34). After the each of the first two announcements Mark records a deed of mercy and after the third, the healing of Barthimaeus. After the first announcement, the text describes (8:17–27) how Jesus healed a father’s son with an evil spirit. The father’s plea ‘have compassion (σπλαγχνίζομαι) on us and help (βοηθέω) us’ resonates with 8:2 and 10:47, 48. Jesus helps despite the father’s little faith (9:24). After the second passion announcement (9:31), Jesus teaches the disciples again about discipleship saying, ‘If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant (διάκονος) of all’ (9:35). He does this in reaction to the disciples’ argument about who are the greatest among them (9:33, 34). As part of his teaching about what the ‘all’ (πᾶς) in his command
means, he brings a child among them and puts his arms around the child (9:36). He then identifies himself with the child, saying that what they do to this child, they are doing to Him and to the One that sent Him (9:37). To be a διάκονος, as a follower of Jesus should be (9:35), means to be receptive even to such a person, as the child represents i.e. someone with no claim to your mercy, an unimportant individual (Sabin 2005:87–89). The διάκονος should be able to σπλαγχνίζομαι (have compassion) with those who cannot demand it from him. Clearly, the disciples do not understand this teaching of Jesus because in 10:13 it is recorded how the disciples try to prevent the children from coming to Jesus. Mark describes Jesus’ reaction with the word ἀγανακτέω (indignant, angry) (Louw & Nida 1989:762). He then ‘took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them’ (10:16). Again he links receiving a child with entering the kingdom of God, saying that whoever does not receive the kingdom as he receives a child shall not enter it (Witherington 2001:279). That means that one should receive the kingdom unconditionally and with open arms as Jesus received the children.56

After Jesus’ teaching in 9:36, John asks Jesus about a man casting out demons in Jesus’ name. The disciples tried to stop him. Jesus’ answer is not to stop him. What the motivation of the disciples was is not known, but their attempt to stop him speaks of exclusivity. Jesus’ answer speaks of receptivity. Jesus then returns to the example of a child (9:41–50), stating again the danger of not being a διάκονος of all; and, to the contrary, to cause one of the little ones to stumble.

In 10:17–22, Jesus’ encounter with a rich man is described. Though the man eventually went away from Jesus because he was not prepared to sell all his things, give it to the poor and then follow Jesus, Mark records that Jesus looked at him and loved him. Williams (2013:145–157) argues that Mark paints a portrait of the rich man in this verse as someone who ‘is needy and worthy of pity’ (p. 146). She says (p. 146) that the rich man stands in Mark’s narrative in contrast to the children who receive the kingdom through their unpretentious faith (10:13–16) and to the disciples in the following passage ‘who have left everything’ to follow Jesus (10:28). She goes

further and says that the rich man also stands in contrast to a scribe, spoken of in Mark 12:28–34. The wise scribe understood something the rich man did not. He understood that the essence of the law is to love God above all and your neighbour as yourself (p. 146). Williams (2013) shows how Mark deliberately linked the two passages with the following similarities:

Both passages introduce a man who comes to Jesus in order to ask him a question, and in both cases the passages refers to the man as ‘one’ (εἷς, 10.17; 12.28). In both episodes, Jesus responds to the question by listing the commandments of God (10.19; 12.29–31). Both the rich man and the wise scribe address Jesus as ‘Teacher’ (διδάσκαλε) when they respond to his answer (10.20; 12.32). Both passages touch on the theme of the oneness of God (10.18; 12.29, 32) and on the relationship between the questioner and the kingdom of God (10.23–25; 12.34). These two passages are the only places where the word love (ἀγαπάω) appears in Mark’s Gospel. (p 155)

She (Williams 2013:155) says further that the connection between these two passages could have been the motivation for Mark to use the word ‘love’ for Jesus’ response instead of the word compassion. Important for our research is that Jesus’ reaction is closely linked to love and compassion.

The preceding discussion implies that Mark puts 8:1–10:52 in a frame of compassion and mercy by describing Jesus’ compassion with the hungry crowd and describing Barthimaeus’ appeal for Jesus’ mercy. Mark then strengthens this theme by describing Jesus’ attitude and deeds of mercy and receptiveness towards persons in need and in weakness, as well as his teaching on discipleship. Jesus applies this to every διάκονος who wants to follow him and points out the grave danger of neglecting this teaching. It is clear that Mark connects the διάκονος- word group closely to compassion, mercy and receptiveness, emphasizing that it should be done to ‘all’ without exclusion. Mark repeats the involvement of the crowd in Jesus’ journey (6 times in Mark 8–10). This can explain to whom (all) he gives his life as ransom (10:45).
6.4.3 Blindness, fear and faith

In 8:1–10:52, Mark uses another important doublet to frame 8:27–10:45 (Morrison 2008:84). In 8:22–26 the healing of a blind man is described. The blind man is healed in two phases. At first, Jesus spits on his eyes and lays his hands on him. After that the blind man’s eyesight is partially restored. Then Jesus lays his hands on the blind man’s eyes, upon which his eyesight is fully restored. In 10:46–52 a blind man asks Jesus to restore his eyesight. Jesus immediately sends him away, fully restoring his eyesight. He then follows Jesus.

Once again it is clear from the context that Mark purposefully introduced this doublet. In the verses just before the healing of the first blind man (8:11–21), Mark leads his readers to understand that the disciples are still blind for Jesus’ identity and what it means for them (Stacey 1979:211). Jesus feeds the crowd and then refuses a demand from the Pharisees for a sign that will confirm his identity (8:1–13). He warns the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and the disciples misunderstand him, thinking that he is referring to them not having enough bread. Jesus reminds them of two occasions on which he had multiplied the bread. Then He asks them this question:

Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ... Do you not yet understand? (8, 17, 18, 21).

This theme of blindness, not understanding and not remembering, or only seeing partially is then taken through the whole of 8:19–10, 45 (Moloney 2011:107). Barthimaeus, the blind man at Jericho, forms a contrast to this. Mark records Barthimaeus’ unwavering faith in Jesus’ authority to heal him and his persistence to have part in Jesus’ compassion (σπλαγχνήζομαι) and mercy (ἐλεέω) (10:46–52) and abandoning what little he has to come to Jesus to be healed (Moloney 2011:108). Barthimaeus is healed immediately (10:52), being an example of what Jesus asks of his disciples as is described in 8:1–10:45. Barthimaeus follows Jesus after his healing (10:52). Within this frame of blindness and healing of blindness, seeing only partially and seeing clearly, many incidents of blindness, hardship of the
heart and unbelief and fear, are described.\(^57\) The first incident is Peter confessing Jesus as Christ. Peter’s confession can be described as ‘a climax, concluding the question of Jesus’ identity that has dominated the whole of 1:1–8:26’ (Roskam 2004:153). But Peter does not see the full picture. When Jesus predicts his coming passion, it doesn’t fit into Peter’s picture and he rebukes Jesus. Jesus sees Peter’s rebuke as the onslaught of Satan. Peter does not see things through God’s eyes, but through those of men (8:33). On the mountain of transfiguration, Peter speaks without understanding because he is ‘terrified’ (9:6). In 9:24 the father of the son with the evil spirit confesses his situation as being between belief and unbelief. After each prediction of his passion, the misunderstanding of the disciples is recorded (9:32–39; 10:32–41). Mark also shows his readers that fear is the consequence of not understanding or not believing. The disciples fear because they do not understand fully who Jesus is and what he can do (9:6; 9:34; 10:32, see also 4:41; 5:36; 6:50). Mark also shows the hardness of people’s hearts (8:17; 9:19; 10:6). The rich man (10:17) illustrates the difficulty of those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

Mark also presents Jesus as a person who is on a path with his disciples, the crowd, individuals and even the Pharisees. Jesus’ prediction of his passion shows a development. The first prediction (8:31) is the only one that speaks of the elders’ rejection of Jesus; the betrayal is mentioned only in the second prediction; the third one is the longest and most specific of the three and mentions Jesus’ death, the scourging, mocking and spitting by Gentiles (Witherington 2001:243). Both aspects that were described in the first two announcements separately are described in the last announcement. Although Jesus sometimes sounds exasperated by their blindness (8:17–21; 9:19), he continues to teach them, never for one moment abandoning them. Mark frames this whole section with the healing of two blind people and uses the metaphor of blindness to illustrate the situation of the disciples, members of the crowd, and the Pharisees in their relationship to Jesus, in their misunderstanding, unbelief and hardness of heart. This frame should be borne in mind when the meaning in which the διάκον- word group is used in Mark 10:45 is explained.

\(^57\) On fear in Mark, see Stacey (1979), *Fear in the Gospel of Mark.*
6.4.4 Authority, kingdom, glory and servanthood

Santos’ (2003) research opens up the paradox of authority and servanthood in Mark. He shows four juxtapositions of material in 1:1–15 (1:2–8, 9, 10–11 and 12–13). He says that this section of Mark leaves the reader with a question about Jesus and John the Baptist (Santos (2003:69): ‘[W]hy are these men of authority pictured as men who serve? As men of authority, are they not the ones who are to receive service? He continues that in Mark 6:32–8:9, the paradoxical nature of Jesus is highlighted by misunderstandings from various characters (p. 162, 163). The linking of the motifs of servanthood, authority and misunderstanding in this section is framed by two feeding miracles (6:32–44 and 8:1–9). In 8:10–21, the linking of the motifs of servanthood, authority and misunderstanding continues as has been shown above. In 8:22–10:52 the paradox is intensified by Jesus’ announcements of his coming passion on the one hand and on the other hand his authoritative deeds and teaching. In this section, the emphasis shifts to Jesus’ death and resurrection and its implication for his followers (Roskam 2004:154). The paradox lies in the way Jesus will exercise his authority. He will not do it like Peter thinks he should, but by fulfilling the plan of God in his passion (8:31, 32). People can be ashamed of him, but he will come into the glory of his Father, and the kingdom of God comes into power on the mountain of transfiguration. He is identified (again, cf. 1:11) as the beloved Son of God, while the disciples see him in glory and the heavenly voice tells the disciples to listen to him (8:38–9:7). However, he is left behind to fulfil his calling (9:7). He shows his power over demons, because he can make anything possible for those who believe (9:17–28) but he will be delivered into the hands of men and be killed. Then he will rise again (9:31). He receives little children and blessed them, but sends a rich man away, aggrieved. The paradox is also clear when tracing the use of the phrase ‘Son of man’ in Mark’s Gospel. The Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins as only God can do (2:10) and he is the Lord of the Sabbath (2:28); but the Son of Man must (δεῖ) be rejected, betrayed (14:21, 41), delivered to the Gentiles, suffer many things, be killed and rise on the third day (8:32; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33) because he came to serve and not to be served and to give his life as ransom for many (10:45). However, the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (8:38). He will come on the clouds with great power and glory (13:26) and he will be seen seated at the right hand of Power. With this the close relationship that Mark
constructs between Jesus’ ministry, passion and glory becomes clear. Mark 10:45, as one of the Son of man sayings, cannot be understood correctly without considering this relationship. Mark paradoxically juxtaposes the motifs of authority and servanthood, glory and humiliation, power and apparent powerlessness to teach the readers the true identity of the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Christ (Cf. Santos 2003:18, 251; Sabin 2005:96). In this regard, Bain (1997) comments on the Gospel of Mark as follows:

Jesus takes a phrase which refers to human frailty and infuses it with divine action until finally, at the trial, the Son of Man clearly has divine undertones. Thus, Jesus used a phrase which referred primarily to his humanity, but which he informed with references to his divinity giving new meaning to the title Son of Man. (p. 197)

Mark’s use of the ‘Son of Man’ phrase in 10:45 can thus be expected to carry the same paradox. This paradox is also emphasised by Jesus’ teaching about discipleship. Robbins (1981:79–114) convincingly points out that the three-step progression in 8:27–10:45, evident in the context of each of the passion predictions, is also present in every scene throughout the Gospel where Jesus calls disciples to Him to teach them (8:34; 9:33; 10:42). ‘These scenes are constituted by a three-step rhetorical sequence that features Jesus summoning disciples as the final step,’ according to Robbins (1981:97; cf. Tannehill 1982:69). Jesus announces his coming passion three times (8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34). Each announcement is followed by resistance from the disciples or behaviour that shows an understanding or mind-set contra to that of Jesus (8:32–33; 9:33–34; 10:35–41). Every time Jesus reacts with corrective teaching on true discipleship (8:34–9:1; 9:35–37; 10:42–45). Tannehill (1982:69–70) sees the ‘pattern extends to the way in which the corrective teaching is formulated.’

According to Mark, Jesus uses an antithetical aphorism in each of the teachings. The antithetical aphorism plays a key role to bring out the paradox between Jesus’ attitude and way to greatness (glory) and the common (men’s) assumptions on how things work. Each of these teachings has to do with how to follow Jesus in search of

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58 See Moloney (2011:105) on discipleship in Mark.
being the greatest and first (9:35; 10:43, 44) or saving your life and sharing in the glory of Jesus and the coming of the kingdom (8:38, 9:1; cf. James and John’s request for positions of preference in the coming glory, 10:37). Tannehill (1982) formulates it from another angle:

The three antithetical aphorisms following the three Passion announcements focus on two human concerns: security in face of death (i.e., saving one’s life) and status or domination (i.e., being first). These two basic concerns are challenged, for the call of Jesus conflicts with both. (p. 70)

While Jesus emphasises with the passion announcements what will happen to him physically, the antithetical aphorisms reveal and challenge the fundamental inner human motivations. Jesus is in this way teaching what the attitude of a disciple should be. It places how God thinks about the way to glory/greatness against how people think about it (Mark 8:33; cf. Santos 2003:208). Various incidents described in 8:22–10:52 can now be better understood in light of the antithetical aphorisms and the passion predictions: The disciples couldn’t heal the boy with the deaf and dumb spirit because they were relying on their own power (and maybe seeking their own glory) instead of appealing to God by way of persistent prayer (9:14–29). The disciples tried to prevent the children from coming to Jesus because they didn’t understand Jesus’ receptiveness towards all people (1:13–16). The rich man couldn’t inherit eternal life/enter the kingdom of God because his own performance and riches determined his security (10:24) and so it is with all rich people, except when God does what is impossible for men, which is to change the heart and mind (10:27). Barthimaeus understood the authority of Jesus over his blindness (to do what is impossible for men), the grace of God personified in Jesus, and the receptiveness of Jesus. Therefore, despite rebukes from the crowd, he persisted in crying out for mercy from the one sent by God, the son of David promised in the Old Testament (10:46–53). Barthimaeus understood that Jesus had come to serve. This contrast between the way of God and the way of men can therefore be expected in Jesus’ third teaching on discipleship (10:42–45).

Having explored the context, the meaning of the διάκονος word group in Mark can now be examined.
6.5 The meaning of the διάκον- word group in Mark

John Collins’s theory on the meaning of the διάκον- word group, especially in 10:45, can now be evaluated in light of the context of the Gospel and in particular 8:1–10:52. The aim of the article is to evaluate the finding of John Collins on the διάκον- word group: that the word group never expresses loving service.

6.5.1 Does the διάκον- word group express loving service in Mark?

It is important to establish the unity of Mark 8–10 to determine which potential meaning of the διάκον- word group was most likely in the mind of the author and readers when they wrote and read Mark 10:42–45. The following question should be answered: Can we say that the meaning of the διάκον- word group in Mark 10:42–45 should be determined by taking the context in consideration?

The answer lies in the structure. As argued above, various researchers point out that Mark 8–10 is a deliberately structured narrative. Breytenbach (1989:1–21) points out that Mark is an episodic narrative. Each episode forms a unit and the parts should be read in the light of the whole and the whole in the light of the parts. The structure of Mark has a three-level repetitive form. Each of the three levels has three parts. The different corresponding parts are linked by their contents and by corresponding words. The three parts of the third level seems to be the summation of the previous parts (Breytenbach 2014:162). Mark 8–10 is bound together by two inclusions. The themes of the inclusions are repeated in Jesus’ words and deeds in the narrative between the different parts of the three levels. This closely knit structure is illustrated in Figure 19: Schematic presentation of the structure of Mark 8–10 (p. 138).
Figure 19: Schematic presentation of the structure of Mark 8–10

The structure can be explained as follows:

- What is described in Mark 8–10 is the attitude of a disciple of Jesus Christ. This attitude is ultimately described as being a διάκονος and a δοῦλος, that is, to serve and not expecting to be served (A,A,A).
- This attitude is further described by Jesus’ words of compassion (B¹) and his deeds of compassion (B²).
- Jesus provides the ultimate description of this attitude by announcing his death three times (C,C,C).
- Compassion forms an inclusion through the description of Jesus’ compassion for the hungry crowd (8:2) and Barthimeus’ cry for mercy (10:46), showing his faith in the compassion of Jesus.
• The theme of compassion is also repeated in the body of the passage with Jesus receiving underserving people and healing the sick (B¹ and B²; 8:22; 9:14; 9:36).

• Jesus’ announcements of his suffering and death is pictured as the ultimate service out of compassion (A,A,A; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33).

• Mark 10:45 describes Jesus’ attitude as one that serves (διακονέω) but all three elements of the structure are combined in 10:45. The attitude of a διάκονος (A: The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve), the compassion (B: to give his life as ransom for many) and his coming suffering and death (C: to give his life as ransom).

If this structure is accepted, it serves as the first very strong indication that the meaning in which Mark uses the διάκον- word group must be determined with thorough consideration of this whole – according to Breytenbach’s theory of the episodic narrative (Breytenbach 1989:5–7).

The second indication of a unitary structure in Mark 8–10 is of semantic nature. The first teaching of Jesus on discipleship is linked to the last one by the two words ἀντάλλαγμα and λύτρον. In 8:37, Jesus argues that if somebody saves his life by winning the world, he will lose it. And then he asks the question: ‘What shall a man give as ransom (ἀντάλλαγμα) for his life?’ The suggested answer is that he has nothing to give. Jesus, according to 10:45, will give the ransom (λύτρον) for many. Breytenbach says about these verses:

In the narrative sequence, Mark 10:45 must be understood in the light of previous utterances of the main character on giving one’s life. In the light of his utterances in 8,36 and 37, it is fair to argue that Jesus as Son of Man in Mark announces to give his life as λύτρον for many, because at the final judgment men and women have nothing that they can give as αλλαγμα for their lives.

The second teaching on discipleship is linked to 10:45 by the διάκον- word group as has been indicated above.

From this semantic argument it can be said that Jesus’ teaching on διάκονία should be read in light of the two previous teachings.
The third important aspect, if one wants to determine the meaning in which Mark uses the διάκονος-word group, is to look at other places in the Gospel where the words are used. The words are used in three other places in Mark. In Mark 1:12, 13 as part of a very short description of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, it is said that the angels ministered unto him (διακονέω). France (2002:85) says about this verse: ‘οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ supplies the opposite side to the hostility of Satan and the animals. Jesus is not alone in his conflict (France 2002:87). Edwards (2002) says:

Although God leads Jesus into the test in the wilderness—as he leads Mark’s Roman readers—God does not abandon either Jesus or them in it. The imperfect tense of the Greek verb for “attended” indicates that the angels ministered to Jesus not at the end of the test (so Matt 4:11), but throughout the forty days. (p. 42)

The emphasis is on the hostile environment and the two opposing sides – Satan and the animals against Jesus and the angels. The διακονία of the angels was focused on supporting Jesus in his temptation, caring for Him and providing in his needs. It can be read as a loving care.

The second passages is Mark 1:31. Jesus healed Simon’s wife’s mother. She got up and ministered unto them. France (2002) has the following interpretation:

The completeness of the cure is emphasised by the clause καὶ διηκόνει αὐτοῖς: no period of convalescence was needed. While διηκόνεω has a wide range of meaning, in this context its basic sense of domestic provision seems most likely; she fulfilled what would have been the expected role of the mother-in-law in the family home, by serving up refreshments. (p. 108)

The emphasis is not on the service, but again the διάκονος-word group is used to describe an action where somebody provides in the needs of others. Her ministry could be out of love or thankfulness.

The third place that the word group is used is Mark 15:41. Here it is said that there were women who ministered to Jesus. It is impossible to determine the precise meaning of the διάκονος-word here. But if it is compared with Luke 8:3 where is said
that many women ministered to Him from their substance, the possibility must be considered that the women cared for his physical needs of food, clothing etc.

Mark’s use of the διάκονος- words in this passages does not exclude service as loving care for somebody.

It is also important to look at the link between 10:45 and other parts of Mark.

If it is accepted that the καὶ in 10:45 is epexegetical, as Collins suggests, and giving his life as ransom therefore describes Jesus’ διακονία, it is important to ask in what meaning λύτρον is used here.

Breytenbach (2014) points to the link between 10:45 and 14:36:

In Mark’s narrative, the main character announces his death (8,31; 9,31; 10,33–34), he takes it upon himself voluntarily (14,36) as something that has to happen by divine ordinance (8,31.33), and declares that as Son of Man he came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (10,45). When Jesus identifies the bread with his body and the wine in the cup with his blood, the utterance in Mark 10,45 is presupposed and the bread and cup metaphorically refers to his life, the life about to be shed for many (14,24). (p.166)

Jesus’ διακονία is a voluntary giving away of his life in obedience to his Father because that was what he came to do/was sent to do. The question could be asked why Mark added the last part of the sentence ‘ἀντὶ πολλῶν’. The answer can be found in the link that Breytenbach (2014:166) sees between 8:37 and 10:45: ‘Because man can give nothing in return for his life (8,37), it is the Son of Man who gives his life as a ransom for many (10,45).’

Jesus’ διακονία is therefore done for the many that follow him but who have nothing to give in return for their lives.

In his teaching Jesus draws a comparison between the way in which the rulers of the Gentiles become the first among their followers as opposed to the way in which the disciples (ἐν ὑμῖν) become great (μέγας) and the first (πρῶτος). He then gives the reason (καὶ γὰρ) or grounds for his teaching (10:45). Mark 10:45 therefore describes the way Jesus will become great and first, that is the Son of Man who they
will see ‘seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven’ (14:62).

To become great and first, the disciples should behave in a certain way because of the goal of the Son of Man’s coming to earth (10:45). It is clear that the behaviour of the rulers of the Gentiles is seen in opposition to how the disciples should behave and to the goal of Jesus’ coming to earth (Wilcox 1996:176; Clarke 2008:65). The opposite of the way of the rulers is described as being a διάκονος among the followers of Jesus and being a δοῦλος of all. Being a διάκονος and a δοῦλος is compared to the way of Jesus, which is to serve (διακονήσαι) and not to be served (διακονηθῆναι). The rulers of the Gentiles are convinced that they should lord it over other people and exercise authority over them to become great and first. The attitude of Jesus stands in contrast to that of the rulers. The way to glory and power, the way to the coming kingdom, is through obedience until death. Therefore when Jesus describes the goal of his coming to earth, he says that he came to give his life as ransom for many (10:45). A ransom was paid to free slaves, captives in war, or the bodies of people killed in war and taken by the enemy (Marcus 2009:749). When did Jesus give his life as ransom? It was when he came to earth as a baby, during his whole life on earth and, ultimately, on the cross. He lived in perfect obedience, withstanding all the temptations from Satan in the wilderness (1:12, 13) and during his life (Combrink 2005:33–66). Ultimately he willingly went to Jerusalem to be crucified because that was part of the charge that the Father gave Him. Mark doesn’t go as far as to describe Jesus’ life and death as substitutionary atonement, but the necessity (δεῖ; 8:31; 9:11) of his passion, his urging of the disciples to take up their cross and follow him, and the emphasis on the impossibility for man to save himself, informs the reader of the meaning of the ransom. The freedom he brings with the ransom of his life is illustrated by the different healings, but also by his teaching – which could free people of fear, conflict and lording it over each other. Jesus’ way to glory and kingship went through serving his father and serving people (Santos 2003:207, 208). Serving people was part of serving his Father, but it is an intrinsic part of his service to the Father. As has been made clear, an intrinsic part of the disciples’ following of Jesus was being receptive to all (including children and beggars, i.e., Barthimaeus) and having compassion for those in need. ‘Disciples are
called to transform their thirst for power and to accept the same type of glory as Jesus: that of the cross’ (Kaminouchi 2003:206). This type of glory comes to you via being a διάκονος and a doulos (10:42, 43). Elsewhere (Kaminouchi 2003:118) says, ‘Two metaphors from the practice of slavery, δοῦλος and λύτρον, play a central role in the message of these verses’. Marcus (2009:749) says that λύτρον, because of the slave imagery in 10:43–45, points to the freeing of slaves.

The strong emphasis on following Jesus and the positive results of following confirm that his whole life, not only his death on the cross, served as a λύτρον for many (Purves 2004:214–222). Those who follow him will be ready to leave everything and enter the kingdom of God (be freed).

### 6.5.2 Summary

The διάκονος word group in Mark describes:

- Service to other people as envoy of God/Jesus
- Service out of compassion and mercy for the needs of others
- Service that is receptive even of people like children and beggars
- Service with the authority that God gives to those who are prepared to lose their lives for Jesus and his words
- Service that is void of self-interest and strive for honour among men
- Service that is performed in expectation of the honour and glory that God gives.

From these findings it is clear that the translation of 10:45 by Collins and Hentchel is much too narrow to express the meaning of the διάκονος word group in Mark. Their translation expresses only the fact that the word group expresses the διάκονος as an envoy. The other facets shown to be part of the meaning of the word group in Mark should also as far as possible be expressed in a translation. It is also clear that compassion and mercy are integral parts of the meaning of the word group in Mark. The translation to English can therefore not be too specific and should leave room for interpretation from the context of Mark. The ESV translation of 10:45 can be

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59 ‘The Son of Man has not come to have tasks carried out for himself but to carry out a task himself’ (cf. Collins 2014:26).
followed: ‘For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’

Collins concludes that the διάκονος word group never expresses loving service; but this doesn’t paint the full picture. Latvus (2008:149) says: ‘...in most of the cases Collins’ view pushes the interpretation too much and is too mechanical.’ It was shown that an integral part of Jesus’ motivation for his διακονία was his compassion towards people. Therefore, obedience to God and love towards other people can never be separated in the motivation for διακονία.

The study of the use of the διάκονος word group in Mark yields the finding that, in Mark, caring for other people is never the only and primary motivation for διακονία, but it can be part of the motivation.
Chapter 7

The use of the διακον- word group in 1 Peter: Διακονία in suffering and the διακονία of the elder in the congregation

Synopsis

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the place of the διακονία of the congregation in times of suffering and to investigate the role of the elder in the congregation from the perspective of the usage of the διάκον- word group in 1 Peter. The focus of the research will be on 1 Peter 4:7–11, where the διάκον- word group is used, and 1 Peter 5:1–11, where the elders and the congregation are addressed. These verses will be examined in the context of the letter and in their relationship to each other. Other applicable Scriptural passages will also be compared to these two pericopes.

7.1 Background of 1 Peter

This chapter of the study relies on the research of other authors for the background of the letter. It is not important for the goal of this chapter to dwell on the questions of the genre, integrity and literary qualities of the letter. It is important though to say something about the authorship. Jobes (2005:325–337) makes a thorough investigation of the language used in 1 Peter and concludes that Peter could be the author. Love (1954:67) records the similarities between 1 Peter and the speeches of Peter in Acts. The following authors also motivate the conviction that Peter is the author of this letter: Grudem (1988:21–33); Michaels (1988:lxvi–lxvii); Davids (1990:3–7); Marshall (1991:21–24); Miller (1993:57–75); McKnight (1996:26–29);

60 Parts of this chapter have been published in two articles, namely 'The διακονία of Practical Theology to the alienated in South Africa in the light of 1 Peter' (Breed 2014c) and 'The diakonia of the elder according to 1 Peter' (Breed 2016b).
61 For a comprehensive discussion of the genre and the integrity, the situation of the readers, the authorship, literature and composition of the letter, see Elliott (2000:7–304), Green (2007:1–12) and Jobes (2005:1–58). Love (1954:67) records the similarities between 1 Peter and the speeches of Peter in Acts. For a survey of older and recent literature on 1 Peter, see Joseph (2012:2–25).
62 For an in-depth discussion of the persecution that the readers of Peter suffered, see Williams (2012).
63 J.J. Janse van Rensburg (1992:26–41; 2010) and F. Janse van Rensburg (2011) give a synopsis of the argument of 1 Peter. In their structural analysis, they convincingly motivate the cohesion of the different sections of the letter. For a survey of older and recent literature on 1 Peter, see Joseph (2012:2–25). For an in-depth discussion of the persecution that the readers of Peter suffered, see Williams (2012).
Schreiner (2003:21–36). These researchers see Peter, the disciple of Jesus, as the author of 1 Peter. Sufficient proof does not exist to contradict the internal claim that Peter is the author of the letter (Jobes 2005:325–337; Green 2007:10).

Other views that are shared with researchers and that are important for this chapter are the following: 1 Peter shows the composition and unity that are typical of a letter (Love 1954:65, 66). The original readers of the letter included both Jews and non-Jews and the letter was probably a circular to several congregations. The addressees are called ‘strangers and pilgrims’ (KJV) or ‘aliens and strangers’ (NIV).

Their alienage included the alien culture of the people among whom they lived. It also meant that they did not hold citizenship of the places where they lived; consequently, they were denied certain rights and were discriminated against (J.J. Janse van Rensburg & Pienaar 2005:28–32; Fagbemi 2009:2). Because many of them had been part of a worldly culture before they had converted to the Christian faith, they no longer participated in certain practices. Acting in this way was strange to the people among whom they lived (1 Pet. 4:4). Probably it was the reason why they were treated with suspicion, contempt and aggression (Fagbemi 2009:2; Achtemeier 2011:76; Joseph 2012:94–121). All of these things caused suffering in their lives (Achtemeier 2011:76). Kovalishyn (2015) describes the purpose of Peter’s letter as follows:

Peter wrote to them to not only encourage and comfort them in their trying situation, but also to urge them on to a special response to the suffering they were experiencing. (p. 234; cf. Breed 2014c:3)

In an analysis of 1 Peter from the perspective of Practical Theology, Breed (2014:6) finds that the building blocks of Peter’s practical theology show that the pastoral character and purpose of the letter binds it together in a unity. Various researchers have confirmed the pastoral character of the letter. McCruden (2005:46) says, ‘Much of 1 Peter’s characteristic sacrificial appraisal of Jesus, therefore, serves a decidedly pastoral end’. In his discussion of the structure of 1 Peter, Feldmeier (2008) states:

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63 Jobes makes a thorough investigation of the language used in 1 Peter and concludes that it could have been Peter that wrote the letter.
The structure intimates that the letter takes up the main themes from various sides in a way that could be described as more counselling/pastoral in order to make its comfort and directives understandable. (p. 22)

Senior and Harrington (2008:12) argue the letter ‘employs traditional motifs for pastoral purpose’. It can therefore be assumed that the work of the elder as described in 5:1–4 should also be read in the light of the pastoral character of the letter.

### 7.2 Structure

J.J. Janse Van Rensburg (1992:26–41, 2000, 2010, 2011) makes a significant contribution to the analysis of the structure of the letter by explaining the cohesion of its sections. From his analysis, it is clear that the letter consists of a heading (1:1–2), a body (1:3–5:11) and a conclusion (5:11–14). Regarding the body of the letter, the structural analysis leads him to observe that 1:3–12 is not merely an introduction to the letter but that it describes the foundation of all the exhortations made in 3:13–5:11; thus, 1:3–12 forms the encompassing base of the letter. The warnings in 2:11,12, forming part of the encompassing base in 1:3–12, serve as base for the subdivision 2:13–4:19. Within 2:13–4:19, 3:13–17 forms the base statement. Figure 20: Synopsis of the argument of 1 Peter (J.J. Janse van Rensburg 1992:29 – translated) (p. 148) represents the broad cohesion in this book.

In 1 Peter 3:13–4:19, the exhortation made in 2:11, 12 is applied to injustices and victimization in society. This is also the section in which 1 Peter 4:10, 11, on which the chapter will focus in the first place, is found. The structure of 1 Peter 3:13–4:19 is represented in Figure 21: Structure of 1 Peter 3:13–4:19 (J.J. Janse van Rensburg) (p. 149).

### 7.2.1 Synopsis of the argument of 1 Peter

A summary of the argument in 1 Peter can now be followed in the representation of the structure of the book in Figure 20 (p. 148).
Heading of the letter
1:1-2 Author, addressees and greeting

Opening of letter
1:3-12 To God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, all the glory! In his great mercy He gave us new birth.

Four subsequent exhortations (base: ‘He gave us new birth’)

Exhortation 1: 1:13-25: Set your hope fully on the grace, and be therefore holy
Exhortation 2: 2:1-10: The duty of a person that is given new life by God and that is reborn to grow spiritually, both personally and together with others
Exhortation 3: 2:11-4:19: Code of conduct for strangers
   2:11-12: The basic exhortation: live a holy life
   2:13-17: Relationship with political authorities
   2:18-25: Relationship with employers
   3:1-7: Relationship with spouse
   3:8-12: Relationship with fellow human beings in general
   3:13-4:19: Attitude towards and response to injustice
Exhortation 4: 5:1-11: Code of conduct in church

Conclusion of letter
5:12-14: Conclusion: Purpose, greetings, conclusion of letter

Figure 20: Synopsis of the argument of 1 Peter (J.J. Janse van Rensburg 1992:29 – translated)

When we take a closer look at the place of 1 Peter 4, the structure in Figure 21: Structure of 1 Peter 3:13–4:19 (J.J. Janse van Rensburg) (p. 149) can be suggested.
The 3rd exhortation (2:11-4:19) applied to response to unjust suffering

3:13-17: Even if you suffer for what is right, you are blessed; in spite of unjust suffering, you must revere only Christ as Lord.

Reason for revering only Christ as Lord

3:18-22: Christ also suffered for sins. He is, however, now at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.

Exhortation as a consequence of Christ’s position of authority

4:1-7a: Therefore, arm yourself with the attitude that he who has suffered in his body – because Christ has suffered – is done with sin. Christ is also ready to judge the living and the dead, since the end of all things is near.

Exhortation as a consequence of the end of all things being near

4:7b-11: Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled. It entails loving each other, offering hospitality to one another and using gifts to serve others.

Summarising exhortation: Attitude towards and response to unjust suffering

4:12-19: Attitude: Do not be surprised as though something strange is happening to you as household of God.
Response: Commit yourselves to the faithful Creator and continue to do good, since it was so hard for you to be saved.

Figure 21: Structure of 1 Peter 3:13–4:19 (J.J. Janse van Rensburg)

The representation of Zwemstra (2003:57) in Figure 22: Structure of 1 Peter 2:13–5:7 (Zwemstra 2003:57) (p. 150) of the argument in 1 Peter 2:11–5:7 clarifies the place of 1 Peter 4:7–11 in the subsection 2:11–5:7 even more and describes the connection between 5:1–7 and 2:13–4:19. If this structure is accepted, the central position of 4:7–11 is evident, as well as the fact that 4:7–11 clearly points to mutual service in the congregation amidst suffering. What is also clear is that the right attitude towards authority (2:13–3:12 and 5:1–7) plays an important role in Peter’s
instruction to the congregation. What could be added to Zwemstra’s structure is that 1 Peter 5:1–7 not only describes the right attitude towards authority but also the right conduct of those in authority, namely the elders.

1 Peter 2:11-12: Live a holy life among the pagans to the honour of God in the following ways:

- a  2:13-3:12: Show the right attitude towards authority in the world
- b  3:13-4:6: Live a holy life amidst suffering
- c  4:7-11: Live a holy life with each other to the honour of God
- b  4:12-19: Live a holy life amidst suffering
- a  5:1-7: Show the right attitude towards authority in the church

**Figure 22: Structure of 1 Peter 2:13–5:7 (Zwemstra 2003:57)**

The representation of Clowney (1988:169–188) of the structure of 1 Peter 4:1–11 as in **Figure 23: The believer as steward (Clowney 1988:169–188)** is particularly important, because it emphasises the task of the believer as steward of the grace of God.

**4:1-11  The blessing of living as stewards of grace**

- 4:1 Union with Christ in death to sin
- 4:2-6 The liberty of salvation
- 4:7 Understanding the time of our stewardship
- 4:8-11a Serving in the grace of our stewardship
- 4:11b The purpose of our stewardship

**Figure 23: The believer as steward (Clowney 1988:169–188)**

The three proposed structures (J.J. Janse Van Rensburg, Zwemstra and Clowney) complement each other to provide a better insight into the meaning of this Scriptural section.
7.2.2 1 Peter 5:1–4 in the context of the letter

The importance of 1 Peter 5:1–4 in the letter is indicated by the way Peter addresses the elder. For the first time after the introduction of the letter, Peter strikes a personal note, introducing himself in the manner it is usually done at the beginning of a letter (Vinson, Wilson & Mills 2010:227). It is the 'most extensive self-description given by the author in this epistle' (Jobes 2005:300). It has given the impression to some commentators that this part of the letter is an add-on from another source, but it could also serve to emphasise what Peter is going to say in these verses. The way these verses form a unity together with the rest of the letter has already been established.

In a detailed analysis of these verses, their connection with the rest of the letter will become even clearer. Janse van Rensburg (1992:29) shows in his synopsis of the argument of 1 Peter that everything said in the letter flows from 1 Peter 1:3–12, which he sums up by saying, 'To God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, all the glory! In his great mercy He gave us new birth'. Janse van Rensburg (2010:203) analyses 1 Peter 3:13–17 in detail and shows that the exhortations of 1 Peter 4:1–19 flow from Christ’s position of authority as described in 3:13–22. It can therefore be stated that these verses (5:1–7) flow from Christ's authority as described in 3:13–22. This can also be said because 1 Peter 5:1–7 speaks of the authority in the church and specifically of the authority of the elder. The proposal of Zwemstra (2003:57) for the structure of 1 Peter 2:13–5:7 shows that 2:13–3:12 indicates ‘… the right attitude towards authority in the world’ and corresponds to 5:1–7, which indicates ‘the right attitude towards authority in the church’ (cf. Elliott 1970:371).

The suggested structure of 1 Peter 4:1–11 of Clowney (1988:169–188) emphasises the task of the believers as stewards (οἰκόνομοι; 4:10) of the manifold grace of God. In 5:2, emphasis is laid on the fact that the sheep the elder should shepherd belong to God. The elders should therefore exercise their oversight ‘as God would have you’. Although the word οἰκόνομος is not used here, it is clear that elders fulfil the task of stewards of the possessions of God according to his prescriptions (Achtemeier 1996:327).
From the preceding discussion and a study of the narrative in 4:1–5:11, a unity structure can be detected in 4:1–5:11 (see Figure 24: Structure of 1 Peter 4:1–5:11; cf. also Achtemeier 1996:321; Green 2007:147, 163–164).

Because of Christ’s position of authority (3:13-22)

    Christ will judge all

B 4:7-11: Serve each other as servants of God
    Serve God’s grace with his gifts via diakonia

    The judgement begins at the house of God

B 5:1-7: Serve each other as stewards of God: be humble

A 5:8-11: Live a holy life amidst the onslaught the Devil and suffering

Figure 24: Structure of 1 Peter 4:1–5:11

The unity structure of 4:1–5:11 flows forth from Christ’s position of authority (3:13–22). From this structure, it can be deduced that the main emphasis in 4:1–5:11 is on the holy lives of the believers amidst suffering and temptations. Living a holy life is addressed at the beginning, the end and the middle of the pericope. Service to each other as stewards of God is the way God’s grace comes to the believers, and this will help them to persevere amidst suffering and temptations. The close connection of 4:7–11 with 5:1–7 points to the conclusion that 5:1–4 describes as the διακονία of the elders. The διακονία of the elders has a pastoral character and they should equip the saints to serve each other with their gifts so that they can live a holy life, no matter how dire their situation.

When one asks about the place of 5:1–11, it is clear that 5:1–5 repeats the theme of 4:7–11, which says, ‘Live a holy life with each other to the honour of God (Zwemstra 2003:57). Janse van Rensburg (2010:3) formulates it in the following way saying, ‘4:7b–11: Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled. It entails loving each other,
offering hospitality to one another and using gifts to serve others.’ Clowney (1988:169–188) sums it up saying, ‘Serving in the grace of our stewardship’. In 5:1–5, the elders are called to serve as stewards that love the congregation with their special gifts and a holy life; the congregation is called upon to live in submission to God and each other.

If the structure in Figure 24 is accepted, it can be stated that 4:1–5:11 could indeed be read as a unity. Peter is teaching the believers about their lifestyle amidst suffering and in what way it should be different from that of non-believers, but he is also teaching them how they will be able, by serving each other, to keep living the new lifestyle despite the suffering.

The pattern that Achtemeier (1996:321) identifies confirms the unity between 4:7–11 and 5:1–5 (see Figure 25: Unity structure – 1 Peter 4:7–5:5 (Achtemeier 1996)).

![Figure 25: Unity structure – 1 Peter 4:7–5:5 (Achtemeier 1996)](image)

A 4:1-6 refers to external relationships; and
B 4:7-11 refers to internal relationships;
A 4:12-17 again refers to external relationships; and
B 5:1-5 refers again to internal relationships.

The internal relationships should contribute to the believer’s ability to follow Jesus in their external relationships.

From the structure proposed in Figure 24: Structure of 1 Peter 4:1–5:11 (p. 152) and the proposed pattern of Achtemeier (1996:321) in Figure 25 above, 4:1–5:5 can be seen as a unity and 5:1–5 should also be understood in the light of 4:1–11. The main emphasis of this pericope is on guiding the congregation to live holy lives through the διακονία of each member and the elder.

If 1 Peter 5:1–4 is seen as a description of the service of the elder, it is firstly clear that it is rooted in the authority of Christ; secondly, the service or the ministry of the elder is intended to assist believers to persevere amidst suffering and temptations.
7.2.3 Themes in 1 Peter

Researchers indicate several themes that run through 1 Peter. Clowney (1988:177) shows that the exhortation to be ‘sober’ (KJ21) or ‘self-controlled’ (NIV) is made three times (1:13, 4:7, 5:8) in the short letter (cf. also Achtemeier 1996:294, 340). J.J. Janse van Rensburg (2010:3; see Figure 21: Structure of 1 Peter 3:13–4:19 (J.J. Janse van Rensburg), p. 149) makes it clear that the exhortation to serve each other (4:10) flows forth from the exhortation to be sober (self-controlled) (4:7). Fagbemi (2009:1–12) argues that the identity of the readers plays an important part in the letter. He reaches the following conclusions:

Identity is a vital aspect of human culture and institution. Identity determines what can be expected of a person, and it dictates how people behave and live their lives. Thus, identity informs character and character defines identity. The same is also true of the early church and its members, not least in 1 Peter where the Christian identity is a central motif that controls the argument of the letter. (p. 12)

Several researchers support this argument. Gupta (2009:62,63) refers to the cultic metaphors through which Peter reinforces the identity of the readers as God’s elect (see also Joseph 2012:69–93) on the one hand and as a missionary community on the other hand (see also Achtemeier 2011:76). Horrel (2007:361–381) discusses the role that the designation Χριστιανός (‘Christianos’) (1 Pet. 4:16) played in shaping the identity of Christians. The word originated from the contact between the believers and the hostile world. In 1 Peter, the word is used in instructions to believers to show them how they could live up to their identity in a hostile environment (Horrel 2007:381).

Other themes can also be distinguished. The investigation of Williams (2011:78) into the use of the imperative participle in 1 Peter leads him to conclude that the author wanted to guide the readers to a decision of will to embrace a specific conduct. The form the guidance takes varies from a mild warning to a forceful command (see also Joseph 2012:122–147). Slaughter (1995) emphasises the importance to consider the literary argument of the letter. In studying 1 Peter, he discovers the following themes:

- The conduct of the believers – everything that Peter wrote was intended to guide the readers to a specific conduct.
The suffering of the believers because of unjust behaviour – the suffering was mainly caused by hurtful remarks and personal attacks (see Joseph 2012:94–121).

The respectful behaviour of the believers towards everyone – all of the instructions regarding relationships may be summarised by the expression *respect for others*. This does not mean the believer had to become a weakling that put up with everything from others; to the contrary, he or she suffered because of the strong stand he or she took against certain practices. The believer had to remain respectful, even in the most difficult circumstances, and this respect excluded revenge.

The believer’s motivation by Christ – the believer had to gain strength from what Christ had done (accomplishing complete salvation) and from how He had entrusted everything to His Father during his suffering.

The believer’s expectation of the future glorification (see Joseph 2012:147–171).

Johnson (1997:601) verbalises the missional window that Peter opened to believers saying, ‘So, Peter cast a vision for them, a vision of missiology that would direct them to their lost world and help them heal it and change it for Christ’s sake.’

A very important theme emphasised right through the letter is that of the family of God (Green 2007:139). This theme is connected with another feature of the letter, namely that Peter’s encouragement of the believers is based on the Old Testament (Hamilton 2010:522). The theme of alienation is closely related to the history narrated in the Old Testament, as well as to the covenant of God (Green 2007:62). McCruden (2005:44–48) points out that Peter used the covenant language to emphasise the identity of the new covenant people, as well as the certainty of God’s compassionate presence (McCruden 2005:44, 45). Peter wanted to show that it was clear from the Old Testament history that the people of God lived as strangers on earth. Adam lost the living space that God had created for him and Eve; Noah lived as a stranger among godless people; Abraham had to migrate and live as an alien and a stranger (Genesis 23:4); both Joseph and Moses experienced this alienage; Israel lived as aliens in Egypt and in the desert, and even in the land that the Lord gave them, they were aliens in the sense that they had to be different from the nations; eventually, they were aliens in exile.
Peter proclaimed to the believers that although they were the new people of God they would always be aliens on earth. Yet, just as the Lord had repeatedly created living space for Israel, he would do for the readers of Peter’s letter. God created the living space for them by sending his Son to live and die for them; Jesus experienced the deepest alienation on the cross so that they could be certain of God’s help. God further created living space by giving them a new birth and by providing διακονία to them in a new faith community. Because of what Christ had accomplished and because of whom He was (is), viz. Lord, they could live in a certain manner. If they lived like that, obedient to the Lord and trusting the Lord to care for them, God would create new living space for them amidst hardships in the world.

Green (2007:64) interprets the letter saying that it is entirely God-centric and Christocentric, ‘ensuring that the whole life is structured in relation to God’s will, mapped according to God's perspective, provisioned and enabled by God, and directed to God’s glory’. Peter intentionally compared the lives of the readers to the life of Jesus. He compared both Jesus and the readers to living stones (1 Pet. 2:4, 5), rejected by people and yet chosen and honoured in the eyes of God (Green 2007:60). In his ministry to the believers in alienage, Peter guided his readers to understand who they were and how they had to live in the light of whom God was and what He had done through Christ.

### 7.3 The διακονία of believers according to 1 Peter 4:7–11

On the grounds of the above-mentioned structural analyses and discussion of the themes, it may be deduced that 1 Peter 4:7–11 represents both a climax and a turning point in the letter (Clowney 1988:179). In searching for the meaning of the instructions regarding the διακονία of the believers in these verses, all the above-mentioned information must be taken into account. The structure of the narrative of 1 Peter 4:7–11 can be presented as in *Figure 26: Narratological structure of 1 Peter 4:7–10* (p. 157).

Janse van Rensburg (2010:209) says that the οὖν in 4:1 puts 4:1–7 in a cause/result relationship to 3:18–22 (see structure in *Figure 21: Structure of 1 Peter 3:13–4:19* (J.J. Janse van Rensburg), p. 149): because Christ suffered, his followers should also expect to suffer. He also shows that six of the seven times Peter refers
to the end times, occur in 4:1–17 (4:5 – κρίνω; 4:7 – τέλος; 4:11 – είς τοὺς αἰώνας τῶν αἰώνων; 4:13 – ἀποκάλυψις; 4:17 – κρίμα; 4:17 – τέλος). Zuiddam (2014:498) concludes from this emphasis on the end times that 1 Peter 4:7–11 speaks about the grace of God, which He gives to his people in the end times. He shows that the emphasis is on God as the giver of grace, the gifts are the gifts of God and the grace that will be served through the διακονία will be the grace of God.

Figure 26: Narratological structure of 1 Peter 4:7–10

Peter is teaching them a new way of living in the light of the fact that the end of all things is at hand (4:7a). This new way of living demands from them to be alert and
sober (4:7b). The reason why they should be alert and sober is that they should be able to pray (4:7c – εἰς προσευχάς). The lifestyle of being alert and sober stands in contrast to the lifestyle of the Gentiles described in 4:3 (indulging in the desires of the flesh, drinking and feasting, loose behaviour and unclean worship of images). The worship of images should be replaced by the worship of God. Verse 11 ends this pericope with the purpose (ἵνα) of all that is set out in vss. 7–10, namely that God in Christ Jesus should be praised in all things, because to God belongs the honour and might for ever and ever. The worship of God forms an inclusion (4:7, 11) and therefore a determining factor in understanding 4:7–11. The two imperatives in 4:7b (σωφρονήσατε οὖν καὶ νήψατε) are followed by three sentences (4:8, 9, 10), which describe the new lifestyle further. Two of the verbs (ἔχοντες – 1:8 and διακονοῦντες – 1:10) are present participles describing an ongoing action.

There is no verb in 1:9, but ἔχοντες can be supposed. The new lifestyle is one of love, hospitality and service. The love should be fervent because all of them are still learning to live the new lifestyle and would sometimes fall back into the old lifestyle. Love that forges can help the one that falls to start anew when he sees that his sin is not held against him (is covered by love). The hospitality should be without murmuring. Because of the many people in the congregation that were poor or needed help, there was a great demand on those who could help. That could lead to murmuring about the burden they had to carry. Verse 10 can be seen as a summary of the previous two commands. Each one has to use the gifts he has received to serve the others. They have to do it because their gifts are part of the manifold grace of God and they are only stewards of God’s grace. He is the owner of the grace and He will call them to account for the way his grace was used. The question will be if the grace was used to serve others so that God will be honoured in all things. In verse 11, there are two sentences starting with εἰς τις, which state two possibilities. Either these two sentences can describe the possibilities of serving (linking with διακονοῦντες) or they can describe how to be a good steward (linking with καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι) when one is speaking or when one is serving. If it is seen as a description of service, the διακονία of believers falls into two categories, viz. the διακονία of the Word and the διακονία of practical service (cf. Acts 6). This can be
compared to the description of Jesus of his διακονία, amongst others in John 12, where He says that He only speaks the words and only does the deeds of his Father (see Chapter 4, p. 73). In the same way, the διακονία should be Gods Words and flow forth from the power of God.

If 4:11 is seen as a description of a steward's good management of his gifts, the grace of God is served in two main ways, namely by speaking and serving. In managing the grace of God by speaking, the διακονία of the Word should not be the words of the speaker, but words that come from God; when a steward performs practical διακονία he should do it with the strength that God gives. The steward of God cannot do the διακονία on his own; it is the grace of God that he serves to the honour of God and therefore he should do it in close relationship with God. Good management is to focus on God.

The focus in verses 7–11 shifts from the believers' relationship with the world to their relationship with each other (Achtemeier 1996:743,744). In explaining the διακονία, it must be kept in mind that the author was equipping his readers to live in a world full of hardships. Moreover, the pagans amongst whom they lived had to see the life-giving power of God in them and that Jesus is the Lord of the believers. In this respect, verses 7–11 are a summary of the previous instruction. These verses contain the instruction to the believers that they had to make living space for each other through mutual love, which included forgiveness, hospitality and readiness for service. Their identity as the chosen and pardoned people of God served as motivation to obey the command to serve each other (διακονέω). They were stewards of the rich variety of God’s grace. The gifts that God gave them enabled them to manage God’s grace in such a manner that the entire congregation would benefit from it. As Green (2007:145,146) says, the way the grace of God flows through believers to each other is through the διακονία of every believer. The service to each other constituted an important part of the equipment that Peter gave to the believers for their lives as newly born members of the family of God in a hostile word, which treated them as aliens. In their poverty, which was part of their suffering, they could serve the wealth of God's kingdom to each other. As is clear from the structure of 1 Peter, these verses (4:7–11) are enclosed by verses providing equipment to the readers to deal with their alienage (4:1–6, 12–19). Serving each
other would equip them to live in such a way that the wealth of God would be manifest to those who did not believe. In this section (1 Pet. 4:11–19), the διακονία is very strongly connected with the reciprocal glorification of God and the believer. This close connection between διακονία and the glorification of God and of believers is also found elsewhere (cf. John 12:26 ff.; Hamilton 2010:523; Breed 2013a:149; Breed & Du Plessis 2012:16–18).

7.4 1 Peter 5:1–11

Before the text of 1 Peter 5:1–11 is analysed it is important to look at some information about the elder in the New Testament

7.4.1 Background: The elder in the New Testament

Knight (1985) gives a thorough description of the Reformed view on the service of the elder in the New Testament. In his exegesis of the New Testament, he finds two words, πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος, which are used for the same office (in Acts: 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17, 28; by Paul in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 2; 5:17; Tit. 1:5, 7; by Peter in 1 Pet. 5:1; and by James in Jas. 5:14). The fact that the two words describe the same office becomes clear in verses where both words are applied to the same group of people (compare Acts 20:17 with Acts 20:28; Tit. 1:5 with Tit. 1:7; and 1 Tim. 3:1 ff. and 1 Tim. 5:17). He (Knight 1985) describes the different backgrounds of the two designators as follows:

The one term, elder or presbyter, reflecting particularly the Old Testament background and usage, designates them in reference to their maturity and authority. The other term, bishop or overseer, more common to the Greek-speaking world, designates them in terms of their particular responsibility of having the oversight and care of the church. (p. 4)

It can be added to this description that the care of the church is closely connected with the proclamation of the Word of God. The elders have two tasks, teaching and ruling. As will be seen in the investigation into 1 Peter 5, teaching includes pastoral care and prayer (cf. also James 5:14). Knight (1985) further shows that the elders

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64 See also Lynch (2012:529–540).
functioned as a group – there were always more than one elder in a congregation. He points to many passages in the New Testament and concludes:

In all these references to the elders in the plural there is also an emphasis on the fact that they share together as a group the unified and shared responsibility of teaching and ruling, of shepherding and exercising the oversight. Therefore, these two truths belong inseparably together. The oversight or shepherding of the church belongs to a plurality of elders and to the plurality of elders belongs the responsibility of oversight and shepherding. That plurality of elders encompasses all the elders known to the New Testament, which can be referred to as teaching elders and ruling elders. (p. 6)

Knight (1985) also points out that some of the functions of the πρεσβύτερος/ἐπίσκοπος are described by other words that do not designate different offices. These persons are also called ποιμήν with reference to their task taking care of the church. While every one of them should be able to teach, there are those among the ἐπισκόποι/πρεσβυτέροι that are called διδάσκαλος and are especially involved in teaching. Furthermore, there are those among them that focus on reaching out with the Word in their διακονία to people that do not yet believe or have strayed from the faith. They are called εὐαγγελιστής.

Against this background, we can now look at the διακονία of the elder according to 1 Peter.

7.4.2 The narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11
In order to elucidate the narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11, the Greek text is set out graphically in Figure 27: Narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11 (see pp. 162–163). The interpretation of the narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11 is given in Table 4: Interpretation of the narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11 (p. 163 ff.). The flow of the argument can be clearly followed in the table.
1 Πρεσβυτέροις τοὺς ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ·
   ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ·
   παθημάτων, ὃ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης α’ ποικαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός,
2 ποιμάνατε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ Θεοῦ,
   ἐπισκοποῦντες
   μὴ ἀναγκασταξι α’ ἐκουσίως,
   μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδὰς α’ προθύμως,
   ἢ μὴ ἀρχιτυποῦντες τῶν κλήσεως ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀρχών γινομένων τοῦ ποιμνίου·
4 καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ α’ πρωτοίμουνος
   κομιεῖσθε τὸν αμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.
5 Ὑμοίως, νεώτεροι,
   υποτάγητε πρεσβυτέροις,
   πάντες δὲ
   ἀλλήλους τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην ἐγκομίσασθε·
   ὅτι ὁ Θεός ὑπερηφάνοις α’ τιτασσεῖ, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσι χάριν.
6 Ταπεινώθητε οὐν ὑπὸ τὴν κραταίαν χεῖρα τοῦ Θεοῦ·
   ἵνα υμᾶς ἐξοσομή ἐν καιρῷ,
7 πάσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν ἐπιρρήησαντες ἐπὶ αὐτῶν,
   ὅτι αὐταὶ μέλει περὶ υμῶν.
8 νήψατε, γρηγορῆσατε·
   το α’ αὐτόν καὶ διάβολος
   ὁ ἀντίδικος ὑμῶν διάβολος
   καὶ τῆς ἀσίτητος στήρειοι τῆς πίστεις,
Figure 27: Narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11

From the figure and the table, it can be deduced that Peter brings the whole congregation before God. Peter bases his admonishing of the congregation on who God is and what He does. The relationship between members of the congregations should be characterised by humbleness. Humbleness starts with the relationship of subjection to God. The promise of exaltation by God and the opportunity to cast your anxieties on Him, serves as motivation for humbleness. Humbleness, faith in the promises of God and watchfulness sustain the congregation in their struggle against the devil. The dominion of God is the ultimate goal of the life of the congregation. The διακονία of the elders must be understood in the light of these deductions.

Table 4: Interpretation of the narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1-11</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Peter 5:1–4: Admonishing the elders</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Πρεσβυτέρους τούς ἐν υἱῷ</td>
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<tr>
<td>παρακαλῶ</td>
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<tr>
<td>ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>ποιμάνατε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ Θεοῦ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπισκοποῦντες</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How they should and should not exercise oversight: Three anti-theses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλ᾿ ἐκουσίως,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μηδ᾿ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου·</td>
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<tr>
<td>καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομιεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Admonishing the congregation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ὅμοιως, νεώτεροι, ὑποτάγητε πρεσβυτέροις,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πάντες δὲ ἀλλήλοις τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην ἐγκομβώσασθε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσι χάριν.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What it means to live with the conviction that ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ταπεινώθητε οὖν ὑπὸ τὴν κραταιὰν χεῖρα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ῥυόση ἐν καιρῷ, πάσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν ἔπειρισμαντες ἐπ᾿ αὐτὸν, ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν.</td>
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</table>
### Narratological structure of 1 Peter 5:1-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>νήψατε, γρηγορήσατε· ὁ ἀντίδικος ὑμῶν διάβολος ώς λέων ὑρωμένος περιπατεῖ ζητῶν τινα καταπίῃ· ὦ ἀντίστητε στερεοὶ τῇ πίστει, εἰδότες τὰ αὐτά τῶν παθημάτων τῇ ἐν κόσμῳ ύμῶν ἀδελφότητι έπιπελεξθαί.</td>
<td>How to fight against the devil: Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ὁ δὲ Θεὸς πάσης χάριτος, ὁ καλέσας ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον αὐτοῦ δόξαν ἐν Χριστῷ ὀλίγον παθόντας, αὐτὸς καταρτίσει ύμᾶς, στηρίξει, σθενώσει, θεμελιώσει·</td>
<td>God’s promise to the faithful: And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>αὐτῷ ἡ δά καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.</td>
<td>The ultimate goal of everything: To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7.4.3 The calling of the elders and διακονία

In 1 Peter 5:1–4, the elders are addressed. Strauch (1995) comments the following about these verses:

> This is the first time since the opening verse that Peter personally identifies himself in the letter. Since no other group of people addressed in the letter receives such persuasive, personal appeal, both shepherds and flock should pay close attention to these instructions. (p. 240)

Although the διάκονος - word group is not used in 1 Peter 5:1–4, the essence of the teaching of Jesus on διακονία plays a huge part in the teaching here (Strauch, 1995:240). The elders are addressed as part of the congregation (Πρεσβυτέρους τοὺς ἐν ὑμῖν, 5:1), and therefore 1 Peter 4:10–11 is also applicable to them. They are stewards of the grace of God and they have to use their gifts to serve the congregation (Green 2007:164). When they speak, it should be words of God and
when they serve, it should be with the strength that comes from God (1 Pet. 4:11). 1 Peter 5:1–4 can thus be seen as a practical application of 1 Peter 4:7–11 to a specific διακονία in the congregation (Green 2007:164).

The text of 1 Peter 5:1–11 will now be analysed.

### 7.4.3.1 Peter’s self-introduction

Peter addresses a specific group in the congregation, the Πρεσβυτέρους. Significantly, this word is placed emphatically at the beginning of the sentence, but it is combined with the words τοὺς ἐν ὑμῖν, also placed emphatically at the beginning. In 5:2, the same words are used to describe the members of the congregation (τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον). Peter thus emphasises the unity of the congregation – members and leaders are part of each other. This brings to mind the image that Paul often uses, namely the congregation as the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul emphasises the unity and variety of gifts, the fact that the different members need each other, and the place that the special gifts have in the body (see Breed & Du Plessis 2013:5–6). In Ephesians 4, Paul stresses the unique purpose of the special gifts, namely to equip the saints for their διακονία so that each one can fulfil his or her function and the body can build itself up in Christ. Peter similarly addresses the elders as part of the congregation. In 1 Peter, two metaphors (see Janse van Rensburg & Pienaar 2005:409–433) express this unity, namely the metaphor of the church as a family, with God as the father (1:23), and the metaphor of a building (temple), with Christ as the corner stone (2:4–7). In 4:17, he calls the congregation the household of God; in 1 Peter 4, he emphasises hospitality, love and service towards each other (4:8–11). By repeating the word ἐν ὑμῖν, Peter wants to make certain that the congregation knows that the elders are not a group separate from the congregation, but are part of the congregation.

The word πρεσβύτερος, according to Louw and Nida (1989), occurs in two different domains:

- old man: ‘an adult male advanced in years’ (Luke 1:18; Domain 9.31);
- elder: ‘a person with the responsibility and authority with regard to socio-religious matters, in both Jewish and Christian communities’, which provides the translational possibility of ‘elders’ (Acts 20:17; Matt. 26:57; Domain 53.77).
Smith (2014) provides the following insight into the meaning of the word ‘elder’:

The early church adopted the term ‘elder’ to refer to church leaders. Leadership in the church of Jerusalem consisted of apostles (ἄποστόλος, apostolos) and elders (presbyteros; e.g., Acts 15:2), though the leadership is described only in terms of elders (presbyteros) in Acts 11:30.

In newly planted churches, leaders were elected, called and appointed; they were known as πρεσβύτερος (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5), according to Schreiner (2003):

Every piece of evidence we have, shows that elders were widespread in the early church. They are mentioned by different authors: Luke, Paul, Peter, and James. They stretch over a wide region of the Greco-Roman world: from Jerusalem, Palestine, the whole of Asia Minor, and Crete. It is also likely that elders functioned as a plurality in the churches since the term is always plural. (p. 231)

In the development of the special services, ἐπισκοπῆ eventually describes the same service as πρεσβύτερος (see Acts 20:17–35). In 1 Peter, however, ἐπισκοπεῖν has not yet become the technical term regarding a bishop’s function, and here elucidates the means by which elders are to shepherd, not a separate task and certainly not a distinct role’ (Lynch 2012:535). When Peter is calling upon the elders, he uses the word παρακαλέω.

According to Louw and Nida (1989), παρακαλέω occurs in four different domains (possibilities) of meaning:

- to ask for something earnestly and with propriety (Acts 28:20) (Domain 33.168);
- to invite (ask somebody to accept offered hospitality – Luke 8:41; 14:8) (Domain 33:315);
- to call together/to call to come to where the speaker is (Acts 28:20) (Domain 33:310); and:
- ‘To cause somebody to be encouraged or consoled either by verbal or non-verbal means’ (Eph. 6:22; Phil. 2:1; Domain 25.150).

In the light of the rest of the letter, the first and third of the above possibilities can be applicable. It is not necessary to choose only one possibility. In a certain context, a
word can carry multiple meanings (Louw & Nida 1989:408; Domain 33.168). Peter appeals earnestly to the elders to come in their minds to the place where he is in his service to the congregation and in his relationship with Christ. In 5:12, Peter describes the objective of his letter. He uses παρακαλέω together with the word ἐπιμαρτυρέω to explain what he has done in his letter. According to Louw and Nida (1989), ἐπιμαρτυρέω occurs in only one domain (possibility) of meaning, namely ‘to provide information about a person or an event about which the speaker has direct knowledge ‘to witness” (John 1:7; Luke 21:13) (Domain 33.262). The encouragement that Peter earnestly asks them to accept is something Peter is certain about; in fact, he was an eyewitness. In accordance with the purpose of his letter, Peter can be characterised as somebody who was certain about his facts when he urged the elders as leaders in the congregation to embrace his encouragement.

![Diagram of Peter’s self-introduction](image)

**Figure 28: Peter’s self-introduction**

Peter identifies himself as the one who calls upon the elders. We can now investigate how Peter introduces himself (see **Figure 28: Peter’s self-introduction**, p. 168). He introduces himself in three ways:

- ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος,
καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων and
ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός

Normally, such identification would be found at the beginning of a letter. The fact that it appears at this stage of the letter, shows the importance of what Peter will be saying. It also shows that he needs to establish anew his relationship with the elders and his mandate to say these things (Lynch 2012:531). He answers the questions that might arise: ‘Who are you to say these things to us?’ and ‘What is your attitude in saying these things?’

Why does Peter use the word συμπρεσβύτερος to identify himself? Some researchers say that he wants the elders to know that he does not think himself more important or superior to them and that he associates himself with them (e.g. Jobes 2005:300; Lynch 2012:531). This impression is strengthened by Peter’s ‘unprecedented shift to first person address and the unmistakable in-house character of his instruction’ (Green 2007:162). Peter also makes certain that they remember he is a fellow-elder and therefore has the right to exhort them to fulfil their task. In this way, he establishes his authority. The next sentence expands on this notion. Peter adds he is a witness of Christ’s sufferings (καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων). It can mean that he saw something of what Jesus suffered through his life and especially at the end of his life; or, it can mean that he himself has already suffered for the sake of Christ (Jobes 2005:301,302). In either way, these words bring to mind his previous reference to the suffering of Christ, namely in 2:21–25. In these verses, he asks the congregation to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who lived in commitment to his calling, and despite his suffering, brought healing to the believers. He also compares the congregation to a flock of sheep (πρόβατα) and calls Jesus the shepherd (τὸν ποιμένα) and overseer (ἐπίσκοπον) of their souls. What Peter might be saying here is that he has already followed Jesus’ example and has experienced suffering for Christ. He therefore has the right to exhort his fellow-elders. He is not asking something from them that he is not ready to suffer himself. This can lead the reader to another conclusion, namely that Peter is handing his task of shepherding over to the elders at the end of his epistle. He has been tending the sheep in their dire situation with his letter. He has done it because Jesus called him
to do it in John 21:15–17, where He uses the same metaphor of sheep and a shepherd. Jesus handed the task of shepherding over to Peter, a task He had received from his Father, and Peter is now handing it over to the elders in their congregation (Elliott 1970:384; Achtemeier 1996:322,324; Elliott 2000:818; Jobes 2005:304).

In the last place, Peter identifies himself as ‘a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed’ (ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός). In 5:4, Peter reminds the elders of the promise that when ‘the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory’ (καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομιεῖσθε τον ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον). In 1 Peter, the relationship between following Jesus in his suffering and the glory that is granted or promised is mentioned several times in connection with Christ (1:11,21) and also in connection with the believers (4:14–16; Feldmeier 2008:233). In the previous instances, the glory points to the future, and specifically to the second coming of Christ. Schreiner (2003:233) points out saying, ‘All of the parallels here make it quite certain that the glory promised in 5:1 is the eschatological reward that will be given when Christ returns.’ He continues, ‘Peter encouraged the elders to follow Christ’s example, enduring suffering in the present so that they will receive the eschatological reward in the future.’

Ensor (2007:235) says that the meaning of δόξα in the New Testament seems to be shaped more by the Hebrew word כבוד (kāḇôd, ‘glory’) and less by secular Greek usage. כבוד expresses a basic meaning of something ‘weighty’ in someone, something that gives him or her importance or makes him or her impressive to others (Kittel, Bromiley & Friedrich 1964:238).

In 1 Peter, the word δόξα is used nine times with various applications. Seven of the times (1:7, 10, 20; 4:13; 5:1, 4, 10) it refers to the eternal glory that Christ and the believers will receive. Once it refers to the fading glory of the flesh in contrast to the Word of God, which remains forever (1:24), and once to the Spirit of glory, which rests on believers (4:14). When it refers to eternal glory, it serves as motivation for the believers to persevere in trials and in a holy living. Christ reached the glory through suffering (Green 2007:212), thereby bringing about the salvation of the believers and setting an example for suffering followers. Green (2007) says:
The journey of Christ is proof that suffering on account of one’s faithfulness to God is neither the whole nor the end of the story. Rather suffering is a precursor to glory … the path to vindication and glory is through suffering. (p. 212)

Joseph (2012:105) reasons that the suffering of Christ is never discussed in isolation in 1 Peter saying, ‘Suffering is followed by resurrection and resurrection followed by glory.’ Participation in the suffering of Jesus will eventually lead to participation in his glory.

The faithful elders are promised ‘the unfading crown of glory’ (5:4). The tradition of giving a crown for meritorious work done was widespread in Greco-Roman culture, and ‘distinguished statesmen and public benefactors received crowns in recognition of their services, and crowns were also awarded to the victors in both military and athletic events’ (Achtemeier 1996:329). The practice was also present in Jewish tradition, although in a more limited way. In various New Testament passages (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tit. 4:8; Jas 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11), the crown is used as symbol for divine eschatological recognition (Achtemeier 1996, note 125).

In John 12:23–28, the verb δοξάζω plays an important role. Jesus calls his hour of passion and death the hour that the Son of man will be glorified (δοξασθῇ). When his soul becomes troubled (John 12:27) and he considers if he should ask the Father to save him from the hour, he makes his decision known by saying, ‘Father glorify [δόξασόν] thy name’. The father then answers, καὶ ἐδόξασα καὶ πάλιν δοξάσω (‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again’). John structures 12:23–28 in such a way to make it clear that the followers of Jesus are fully involved in this hour (see Breed 2014b:3–4). The way that they are involved is through their διακονία, and their διακονία implies that they should be ready to die for the sake of Jesus (John 12:25–26). The promise of Jesus is that the one who serves (διακονῇ) Him will be honoured (τιμήσει) by the Father. John does not use δοξάζω to describe how the Father will honour the διακονος of Jesus, but when John 12:26 is compared to John 17:22,23, it becomes clear that the honour includes the glory Jesus gives and the glory flows from being one with Jesus and the Father and with one another. John 12:25–26 speaks of the oneness with Jesus in terms of ‘serve’ (διακονέω) and ‘follow’ (ἀκολουθέω), and the outcome is that He is honoured (τιμήσει) by the
Father. John 17:22, 23 also refers to the oneness, but in terms of the disciples accepting the words of Jesus (17:7,8), and the outcome is that they receive the same glory (τὴν δόξαν) with which Jesus has been glorified. Honouring, glorifying and διακονία are linked closely together in John as are the elders’ faithful fulfilling of their work and their glorification in 1 Peter 5.

This conclusion also corresponds to 1 Peter 4:14: ‘If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory (δόξα) and of God rests upon you.’ As in John 12 and 1 Peter 5:3,4, suffering for Christ and glorification go hand in hand here.

7.4.3.2 The διακονία of the elders

Peter describes the διακονία of the elders in 1 Peter 5:2b–3. The narratological structure of 5:2–3 is illustrated in Figure 29: The task of the elder (p. 173) (cf. also Forbes 2014:165). From this structure, it can be deduced that ποιμάνατε (‘to shepherd’) is the main task (διακονία) of the elders. The way they should fulfil this task is by exercising oversight (ἐπισκοποῦντες; Forbes 2014:168; Lynch 2012:535). Their attitude when they exercise oversight is described by the three antitheses in 5:2b–3. The domains of meaning in which the different words that describe the διακονία of the elders can be used will now be investigated to establish what their meaning could be in the context of 5:1–4.

According to Louw and Nida (1989:518, 466, 479), ποιμάνω occurs in three different domains (possibilities) of meaning:

- ‘To herd and tend flocks of sheep or goats’ (John 21:16; Domain 44.3).
- Guide and help/take care of with the implication of providing for (Matt. 2:6; Domain 36.2).
- To rule with the implication of direct personal involvement – to govern (Rev. 2:27; Domain 37.57).
Figure 29: The task of the elder

Lee (2004:2969) chooses the translation ‘feed’. He compares 1 Peter 5:2 with John 21:15, where John uses the word βόσκω to describe the command of Jesus to Peter to take care of his lambs (cf. also Achtemeier 1996:325; Jobes 2005:304). Lee (2004:2969) also links 1 Peter 5:2 with 1 Peter 2:1–5, where Peter calls upon the congregation to build themselves up in their faith by coming to Jesus through the Word so that they can grow in their faith like babies who are fed with milk. Dogterom (2003:14–16) points to the ingressive aorist imperative of ποιμάνατε, ‘suggesting that energetic action is required. To shepherd is not simply to occupy a position, but to care for the flock placed in one’s care diligently, aggressively. In this care, motive is critical.’ Achtemeier (1996:325) says that the image of a shepherd as leader among God’s people has a long tradition in Israel as described in the Old Testament (cf. Lynch 2012:530). Boring (2011:170) says for the readers of the Eastern Mediterranean the image of shepherd and sheep is not a soft and warm relationship, but one of authority to guide and to rule, as a king should do.

In the context of the whole letter, ΠΟΙΜΑΙΝΩ here carries a strong pastoral content. The elders should shepherd the flock of God in their practical (dire) situation as Peter...
instructs them in the letter. They are accountable to God, who puts the sheep under their care (amongst them). They conduct their task with the authority of the Chief Shepherd, Christ (cf. 5:4; Lynch 2012:534).

According to Louw and Nida (1989), ἐπισκοπέω occurs in three different domains:

- ‘To take care of or tend with the implication of continuous responsibility’ (Acts 15:14; Domain 35.39).
- ‘To give careful consideration to something with the implication of guarding against’ (Heb. 12:15; Domain 30.46).
- To minister/serve, that is ‘to have the responsibility of taking care of someone, with the implication of an official responsibility within a congregation’, providing translational possibilities as ‘to minister/serve, to take the responsibility, to take care of’ (Domain 53.70).

Louw and Nida (1989, at 53.71) makes an important remark stating, ‘In translating ἐπισκοπή (53.69), ἐπισκοπέω (53.70), and ἐπίσκοπος (53, 71), it is important to combine the concepts of both service and leadership, in other words, the responsibility of taking care of the needs of the congregation as well as directing the activities of the membership.’ Janse van Rensburg (2009:426) comments saying, ‘A good translational equivalent could for instance be “helper and leader”, or perhaps “guardian”.’

After studying the possible meanings of ἐπισκοπέω and etymologically related words, Janse van Rensburg (2009:426–427) concludes that an ἐπίσκοπος is a guardian whose task is leadership, which takes place through service; thus, someone who has church leadership as ministry. The guardian task means such leaders have to take care of God’s flock like shepherds (ποιμάνατε), which means amongst others they must have a gift to teach (διδακτικός; 1 Tim. 3:2). Further, they must hold on to the good doctrine so that they can teach it to others and refute opponents (ἳνα δυνατὸς ἦ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαινούσῃ καὶ τούς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν – Tit. 1:9). Acts 20:28 has the following instruction for elders: ‘Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [ἐπισκόπου], to care for the church of God, which He obtained with his own blood.’ Titus 1:7 uses another image, namely
that of the guardian that is the manager of the household of God [Θεοῦ οἰκονόμον]. It means that while God is the kurios (‘boss of the house’), the ἐπισκόποι manages the house with a mandate from the house boss (Janse van Rensburg, 2009:427). Wilson (2015:1) says that the work of the elder in the New Testament is bound up with the idea of ‘serving the church by protecting her from harm.’ Zerwick and Grosvenor (1974:714) says that the root of ἐπισκοποῦντες is σκοπέω (‘oversee’) and that ἐπι-σκοποῦντες ‘combines the senses of ‘superintend’ and ‘watch over’, authority and care.’ The way the elder should shepherd the flock is thus by watching over them with diligence, using his authority to protect the sheep from harm.

The word ἐπισκοποῦντες, by describing the way the elders should shepherd (ποιμαίνω) the flock, modifies ποιμάνατε and can be seen as an adverbial participle (Vinson, Wilson & Mills 2010:231, 232; Achtemeier 1996:325), and it ‘is then further modified by three sets of adverbial qualifiers’ (Jobes 2005:304). The meanings of these qualifiers are as follows:

- The first antithesis (qualifier): μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλ’ ἐκουσίως ἀναγκαστῶς: According to Louw and Nida (1989:671), this word occurs in only one domain (possibility) of meaning: ‘To be obligatory on the basis of being imposed’ (1 Pet. 5:2; Domain 71.31). Peter tells them that their motivations for shepherding and oversight should not come from outside themselves. Elders should be self-motivated in their διακονία.

- ἐκουσίως: According to Louw and Nida (1989:671), this word occurs in only one domain (possibility) of meaning: ‘to be willing to do something without being forced or pressured – willingly of one’s own free will’ (Philem. vs.14; Domain 25.65).

For the congregation it means that they should never put pressure on somebody to become an elder. 1 Timothy 3:1 states the positive side of this antithesis: ‘The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires (ὀρέγομαι: long for; covet after; reach out after) to the office of overseer (ἐπισκοπή), he desires (ἐπιθυμέω: set the heart upon) a noble task.’ Both 1 Peter 5 and 1 Timothy 3 speaks of somebody that has an active longing to do the work of an overseer.
• The second antithesis (qualifier): μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως αἰσχροκερδῶς: According to Louw and Nida (1989:292), this word occurs in only one domain (possibility) of meaning: ‘To be shamefully greedy for material gain or profit’ (1Tit. 3:8; Domain 25.26).

προθύμως: According to Louw and Nida (1989:671), also this word occurs in only one domain (possibility) of meaning: ‘to be eager to do something’. They (Louw & Nida 1989:297) suggest translating 1 Peter 5:2 as follows: ‘Look after it... not for pay, but from a real eagerness to serve.’ They are of the opinion that it would be wrong to equate the meaning of προθύμως with that of ἐκουσίως, for προθύμως implies far more desire and eagerness than ἐκουσίως: ‘They are not to do so under compulsion (ἀναγκαστῶς) but voluntarily (ἐκουσίως).’ Louw and Nida continue that some elders might not have had the wish to serve and were overseeing unwillingly. Peter wanted a shift in attitude from them. Vincent (1887:666) contends that ‘willingly’ is not a strong enough translation of προθύμως, saying the latter denotes ‘a forward spirit... not mere willingness, but zeal.’

The question in this antithesis is what the source of motivation is for the elder. If money motivates you to be an elder, it is wrong. The motivations should come from your relationship with God and his flock (5:4, 6).

• The third antithesis (qualifier): μηδὲ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου·

κατακυριεύω, κατακυριεύω: Louw and Nida (1989:37, 50) suggest the following possible meaning of the word: to rule or reign over, with the implication in some contexts of ‘lording it over’ – ‘to rule, to govern, to reign over.’

Thayer (1889:332) gives the following possible meanings of the word: ‘To bring under one’s power, to subject to one’s self, to subdue, master: τινός, Ac. 19:16 and to hold in subjection, to be master of, exercise lordship over: τινός, Mt. 20:25; Mk. 10:42; 1 Pet. 5:3.’ Thayer’s interpretation seems to fit the given Scriptural passages best.

The positive part of this antithesis (ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου·) describes the attitude of the elders. According to Schreiner (2003:235), they were
people who could be followed in their example of service to the flock: ‘Followers of Jesus are to use their authority to serve, and in that way they imitate the example of Jesus himself (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).’

All of the antitheses refer to the motivation for working as an overseer. The first antithesis says that the motivation should not flow from the outside pressure of other people, but should arise from the inner conviction of the elder. The second antithesis says that money should not motivate the elder, but an eagerness to serve the flock. The last antithesis says that power over other people should not be the motivation, but the desire to be an example to the flock of somebody that follows the example of Jesus.

1 Peter 5:2–3 can now be interpreted as follows in the context of the letter: Elders, you that are under the authority of Christ, use your authority to care diligently, aggressively for the flock placed in your care:

- by overseeing them not as if it is a task imposed on you (μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς), but willingly without outside pressure (ἀλλ᾿ ἐκουσίως);
- by overseeing them not for pay (μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς), but from a real eagerness to serve; and
- by not subjecting them to you, but by living as an example of service as Christ had lived;
- thereby protecting them from any harm.

7.5 1 Peter 5:1–11 compared to the teaching of Jesus on διακονία

When the teaching of Jesus on διακονία is compared to 1 Peter 5:1–4, it can be deduced that the writer of 1 Peter made use of the general perception in the early churches that leadership went hand in hand with compassion. In truth, it was perceived as a prescription from Jesus (Dogterom 2003:6, 9, 16). In training his disciples, Jesus led them repeatedly to develop compassion for people. In Mark 6:34, the following is written about the attitude of Jesus towards the people following him:

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.
When it got late, He asked the disciples to give food to the crowd. Jesus multiplied the available bread and fish. In Mark 8:2, the same situation occurs and Mark records these words of Jesus to his disciples: 'I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.' In chapters 6–10, Mark describes various incidents where Jesus took compassion on people, sometimes reprimanding his disciples for not being open to the need of others (Mark 7:25–29; 8:22–25; 9:17–29; 10:13–16; cf. Chapter 6, p. 124). When the disciples argued amongst themselves about who is the greatest, Jesus taught them about their διακονία saying, ‘If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant [διάκονος] of all.’ To illustrate what this means, Jesus took a child and said to his audience, ‘Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me’ (Mark 9:37). The διακονία of a disciple of Jesus is illustrated by the attitude of somebody who receives (have compassion on) a non-deserving person like a child (cf. 1 Pet. 4:7–10), who can give nothing back. Such a person sees the child as the representative of Jesus and his Father (cf. Mark 9:41). In Mark 10:17–31, Jesus demonstrates to his disciples what the cost of discipleship is, namely to disregard trust in material possessions and the comfort of intimate close relationships, when any of these stands in the way of following Jesus. In Mark 10:29–30, Jesus draws the attention of his disciples to the care of God for those who sacrifice all to follow Jesus.

In Chapter 6 (p. 124), it has been shown that Mark 10:42–45 can be seen as a summation of the teaching of Jesus to his disciples about their διακονία. The contrast that Jesus illustrates between the worldly rulers and the way his disciples should relate to those under their care lies in selfish gain versus the διακονία of Jesus and his disciples. The disciples should become servants and slaves of the people under their care, as Jesus did by his sacrificial life and death. From this example in Mark’s gospel, it can be accepted that 1 Peter 5:2b is built on the teaching of Jesus on the διακονία of the disciples in their capacity as future leaders of the church.

Breed (2014) comments that John 12 describes the point where Jesus realised that the time of his passion had arrived (cf. Chapter 3, p. 53; and Chapter 4, p. 73). On the one hand, John 12:21–27 describes the contemplation of Jesus of the things that
were awaiting Him and of decisions he would have to make (John 12:27): ‘Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.’ On the other hand, Jesus made his disciples part of that hour (John 12:25–26):

> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves [διακονέω] me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant [διάκονος] be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.

Discipleship and διακονία need decisions. Everyone that wants to serve Jesus must follow Him and must be prepared to do whatever that hour asks of him or her, even if it requires dying. Peter puts the elders before this decision when exhorting them to their service.

In his teaching on the διακονία of the disciples in Matthew 20:25 and in Mark 10:42, Jesus uses the verb κατακυριεύω to describe the rule of the gentile masters. He contrasts it with his own rule and the disciples’ διακονία. Elliot (2008) says about 1 Peter 5:3:

> Since Mark 10:42/Mt 20:25 are the only other New Testament occurrences of the verb katakyrieuô (cf. kyrieuô, Lk 22:25), it appears that the Petrine author has incorporated a reminiscence of this dominical logion into his triad of antitheses. (p. 690; cf. also Elliott 1970:374–375)

In Luke 22:25, the word κυριεύω, which refers to one that should be served according to the world’s standards, is in stark contrast to Jesus’ attitude as one who serves (διακονέω). His disciples called him διδάσκαλος and κύριος (John 13:13), but He washed their feet like a slave. Peter builds his prescriptions for the elders to be examples to the congregation instead of dominating them on this teaching of Jesus (cf. Luke 22:27; John 13:12–15). Peter contrasts κατακυριεύω with being an example. The ultimate example of the teaching of Jesus on his διακονία is that he gave his life as ransom for many, an example to be followed by the disciples.
From 1 Peter 5:5 onwards, Peter is not addressing the elders alone anymore, although he still involves them. He talks about the younger ones’ attitude towards the elders; when he talks to all of them, the elders are included.

The link with the διακονία as Jesus explained it according to the gospels, can clearly be shown by some words and expressions used in 1 Peter 5:1–11.

1 Peter 5:3: τῶν κλήρων
The basic meaning of klēros is ‘lot’ (in drawing lots), but ‘portion’ and ‘inheritance’ are also possible meanings (also in Egyptian papyri, ‘land in fee’) (Kittel et al. 1985:442). Hiller (2011:140) explains the meanings in more detail saying, ‘More profoundly, the Greek word for ‘lot’ is applied in the OT to God’s choice of Israel: it is as if God assigned Israel to himself as his special responsibility (Deut. 9:29).’ With the words ‘τῶν κλήρων’ Peter points the elders to the teaching of Jesus on the election of God that resulted in the establishment of the church (John 6:63, 65; 10:16). In 1 Peter 4:10, Peter uses the word οἰκονόμος (‘steward’) to describe the task of the believers in their διακονία. Using the word κλήρων here points to the meaning that the congregation is the allotted portion of God, which is now entrusted to the elders to look after as the people of the new covenant. The elders are the stewards and God will hold them responsible for the wellbeing of the κλήρων. This explanation reminds one of the words of Jesus to Peter (John 21) when he said, ‘Feed my lambs’; ‘Tend my sheep’; ‘Feed my sheep’. It has been shown in Chapter 4 (p. 73) that this was Peter’s διακονία and the way he had to give up his life following Christ. The flock belongs to Jesus and the elders are only shepherds and oversee them for Jesus.

1 Peter 5:5a: Ὥμοιως, νεώτεροι, ὑποτάγητε πρεσβυτέροις, πάντες δὲ ἀλλήλοις τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην ἐγκομβώσασθε · ὅτι ὁ Θεός ύπερηφάνως ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσι χάριν.

First, Peter calls upon the young people (either young in age or young in faith) to subject themselves to the older people (or elders) (Jobes 2005:307; Hiller 2011:138). Next, the whole congregation is addressed. In 2:13–3:7, Peter concludes
his teaching to specific groups with instructions to the whole congregation. He repeats the pattern of the instructions to the elders to the congregation here (Boring 2011:169). They should clothe themselves with humility towards one another. It is possible that the image of clothing is meant to remind the congregation of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, as he tied his robe around his body on that occasion (John 13). The reason why the congregants should act likewise is that God resists those who are arrogant, but gives grace to the humble. This is in accord with the teaching of Jesus in Mark 10, Matthew 20 and Luke 22, which relate how He addressed the arrogance of the disciples. After arguing amongst themselves about who were the greatest, the sons of Zebedee asked Him to have the most important places next to Him in his kingdom. Jesus showed them God’s way to greatness, namely that they should become everyone’s servant (διάκονος) with the promise that God would give them greatness. That is how Jesus went about, serving and not waiting to be served, because He knew that his Father would exalt Him (cf. Boring 2011:174).

- 1 Peter 5:6–7: Ταπεινώθητε ὑπὸ τὴν κραταιὰν χεῖρα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα υμᾶς ὑψώσῃ ἐν καιρῷ, πᾶσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν ἐπιρρίψαντες ἐπ’ αὐτόν, ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν.

What Peter asks the congregation here is what Jesus did, as described in Matthew 26:39–42; Mark 10:36–42; Luke 22:42–46 and John 12:27; 18; 18:11. John 12 relates that Jesus talked about how He would be ‘lifted up’ at the time of his glorification. Being ‘lifted up’ in John 12 has the dual meaning of his crucifixion and of his ascension. Jesus would humble Himself under the mighty hand of God and God would lift Him up. Jesus said to his disciples that if anyone wanted to serve (διακονέω) Him, they should follow Him and He promised them that where He was, his servant (διάκονος) would also be, and the Father would honour the one who served (διακονέω) Jesus (John 12:26; cf. Breed 2014b). It is most probable that 1 Peter 5:6–7 builds on the same tradition as John 12 in the description of the διακονία of the followers of Jesus. Hillyer (2011:145) states, ‘In the OT, the expression the mighty hand of God almost always refers to divine deliverance.’ To humble yourself under the mighty hand of God thus means to accept the suffering that comes your way as something that is still under God’s control and that He will
use it to your good, while you are waiting for Him to deliver you (lift you up) (cf. Boring 2011:174, 175).

- 1 Peter 5:7: πᾶσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν ἐπιρρίψαντες ἐπ᾿ αὐτὸν, ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν.

This verse can be seen as the summation of Peter’s teaching to his readers. Nothing of what he has exhorted them to do in their dire situation and in his instructions to them will be possible if they cannot cast their anxieties on God and if they cannot believe, He will take care of them.

- 1 Peter 5:8: νήψατε, γρηγορήσατε· ὁ ἀντίδικος ὑμῶν διάβολος ὡς λέων ὑπηυρέτησε· ζητῶν τινα καταπίῃ

1 Peter 5:8 forms an inclusion with 4:7b. In both verses, the imperative νήψατε is used; in both verses, the command is connected with the end of times (4:7a; 5:8–10). 1 Peter 4:8 also corresponds with 5:11; in both verses, the ultimate purpose of the service of the congregation is characterised by the δόξα (‘glory’) and κράτος (‘power’, ‘dominion’) of God. 1 Peter 4:8–10 is enclosed by the command to watch (νήψατε, 4:7) and the description of the ultimate purpose, the δόξα (‘glory’) and κράτος (‘power’, ‘dominion’) of God (4:11). 1 Peter 4:8–10 describes the διακονία of the congregation as a means whereby the congregation can handle the suffering that is described at the beginning and the end of chapter 4. 1 Peter 5:1–6 also describes the way believers should live together, while 5:7–10 also talks about their struggle on earth. If all these resemblances are accepted, the unity between the διακονία of the congregation, which is described in 4:9–10, and the exhortations to the elders and the congregation, which is described in 5:1–11, is confirmed.

The use of the verb ὑψόω (1 Pet. 5:6) reminds one of John 12:32, where John quotes Jesus and uses the same verb to point to the crucifixion of Jesus as his glorification. As in 1 Peter 5:6–8, this word in John 12:31–32 is used in the context of the war against Satan. In John, the lifting up (ὑψόω) of Jesus goes together with the casting out ‘the prince of this world’. This makes it probable that 5:8 means that Satan devours those who forget to live from the certainty that God will exalt them and therefore, not being humble (‘getting proud’, 5:5) and try to serve themselves.
other words, victory over Satan can only be achieved by the way of the cross as Jesus did, namely by humbling oneself under the mighty hand of God.

In the reappointment of Peter by Jesus in John 20, the verb ποιμαίνω describes the work that Peter should do with the sheep of Jesus. In the discussion of the διάκονωσις word group in John 12:26, it has been shown in Chapter 4 (p. 73), based on the research of Van der Watt (2008:23), that there is a close relationship between John 12:23–26, 13:31–14 and 21:15–22. It has been concluded that Jesus describes Peter’s διακονία in John 21:15–22. Van der Watt (2008:23) says in this regard, ‘Peter becomes the narratological example of what it means to come to the point of laying down one’s life and being a servant.’

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, Peter tells the elders to be an example to the flock. In John 12:23–26, Jesus teaches his disciples about the way they should live after his departure. They must be prepared to lose their lives for the kingdom of God (John 12:25) and then Jesus says, ‘If anyone serves me [ἐὰν ἐμοί διακονῇ τις], he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant [ὁ διάκονος] be also. If anyone serves me [ἐμοὶ διακονῇ], the Father will honour him [τιμήσει αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ].’ Peter also, in his address of the elders, lay some emphasis on the honour they will receive if they conduct themselves according to his prescriptions. 1 Peter 5:4 expresses this promise stating, ‘And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.’

From this comparison of Peter’s teaching on the duty of elders with the teaching of the gospels on διακονία, it is possible that the writer of 1 Peter made use of existing material. It is also possible that he recalled events of which he had been personally an eyewitness and words he himself had heard. Whatever might have been the case, he applied the teaching of Jesus on διακονία to the duty of elders. We can now conclude, in the first place, that in 1 Peter 5:1–5, Peter describes the διακονία of the elders based on the teaching of Jesus on leadership as also recorded in the gospels. This conclusion is confirmed by Green’s comments on the connection of 1 Peter 5:1–5 with the preceding verses in 1 Peter 4.65 Green (2007:163) points out

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65 Green is one of few writers who try to explain the connection between 1 Peter 5 and 1 Peter 4.
that Peter addresses three groups of people in 1 Peter 5:1–5, each group by a verb in the imperative mode:

- vs. 1-2 elders like shepherds, tend the flock of God
- vs. 5a younger people subordinate you to the elders
- vs. 5b everyone clothe yourselves in humility

Second, many of the terms Peter employs in these verses fall into two (spacious) semantic domains – words associated with honour/glory and terms that mitigate an inflated view of one’s importance (see Table 5: Two semantic domains into which many terms Paul uses fall, p. 184). One can amend Green’s words by saying that Peter is using words associated with honour/glory/authority and terms that describe the way leaders appointed by God should exercise their leadership. Peter is clearly emphasising the same attitude that Jesus described in his teaching about leadership according to the gospels. On the one hand, the leaders should be certain of their privileged position, having the authority of God, who sends them to speak his words and do his deeds, and expecting the honour that God promised to his servants, but on the other hand, doing their διακονία with the attitude of Jesus.

Table 5: Two semantic domains into which many terms Paul uses fall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Honour/Glory</th>
<th>Mutuality/Humility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Fellow-elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner in the glory to be revealed</td>
<td>Suffering of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising oversight</td>
<td>Shepherd/tend the flock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercion</td>
<td>Voluntary, like God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greedily</td>
<td>Freely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lording over</td>
<td>Serve as example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown of glory</td>
<td>Christ is the Chief Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrogance</td>
<td>Subordinate yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clothe yourselves in humility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the light of the closely knit structure of 1 Peter 4:1–5:11 (see also Zwemstra 2003:57, above) it can be said that Peter prescribes to the elders how they should lead the congregation in their suffering as foreigners and exiles (4:1–6 and 4:12–19). The purpose of his teaching is that they can serve each other with their gifts (4:7–11)
and live among the Gentiles proclaiming the excellences of the One that called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. (2:9b; 4:16). They should do this by following Jesus and their fellow-elder Peter.

### 7.6 Conclusion

1 Peter 5:1–5 can be seen as part of a well-structured letter and its place in the letter contributes to the way the ministry of the elders should be understood.

There is a close connection between 1 Peter 4 and 5, which points to the conclusion that 5:1–5 describes the διακονία of the elders.

From the place of 1 Peter 5:1–5 in the structure of the letter, the following can be deduced: The διακονία of the elders is rooted in the authority of Christ. The διακονία of the elders is a pastoral task. The elders should take over the pastoral care that Peter, with his letter, has given to the congregation in their practical situation.

Peter describes the διακονία of the elders with the words ποιμαίνω and ἐπισκοπέω. Shepherding (ποιμαίνω) the flock is the main content of the elder’s διακονία. The way the shepherding should be done is described by the word ἐπισκοπέω (‘oversee’). Oversee in this context also mean to protect the sheep from harm. The attitude (motivation) with which the elders should carry out the oversight is described in three antitheses, and this attitude points to the attitude of Christ.

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66 See also above the connection between 5:1–7 and 2:13–3:12, i.e. the right attitude towards authority.
Chapter 8
Reflection on the diaconal service based on
Acts 6:1–7

Synopsis
Acts 6 is traditionally considered the description of the origin of the service of deaconship. The essence and duty of diaconal service is inferred from Acts 6:1–7; it is the service responsible for the care of the poor and promotion of mutual support and love in the church. This chapter re-examines Acts 6. It investigates whether this text truly describes diaconal service and what it conveys about the content and essence of the seven’s service. This study shows that Acts 6 does not necessarily describe the institution of an office and that the content and essence of the special diaconal service cannot be derived from this text. Acts 6:1–7 is a description of the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit within the church, related to the difficulties that arise with the ministry (διακονία) due to rapid growth.

8.1 Introduction
Acts 6 is traditionally viewed as the description of the origin of the service of the deacon (McKee 1989:66, 67; Finger 2007:247; Campbell 2009:66; Breidenthal 2013:278). The essence and task of diaconal service work is also deduced from Acts 6 – it is a service that furthers the care of the poor in the congregation and that has to promote mutual empathy and love. This chapter considers Acts 6 anew. It examines whether this part indeed does describe the special service of deacon and what it says about the content and essence of the service work of the seven. Other parts of Scripture are only examined in as far as they can contribute to an understanding of Acts 6.

First, the chapter scrutinises the structure of the book of Acts and the place that Acts 6:1–7 has within this structure. After this, the chapter examines if the men who were elected according to Acts 6 were seven deacons. In an effort to determine this, the problem that arose in the congregation is first investigated. The chapter

67 Parts of this chapter have been published in the article, ‘Besinning oor die diakonale dienswerk na aanleiding van Handelinge 6:1–7’ [Reflection on the diaconal service with reference to Acts 6:1–7] (Breed, G. & Breed, D.G. 2010). Only the contribution of G. Breed is used in the chapter.
consequently asks what the task was that the apostles wanted to concentrate on. Only once the relationship of Acts 6:1–7 with the rest of the Bible book has been determined, the problem of the widows has been analysed and the task of the apostles established, one can determine what the content and essence of the seven men’s commission was.

8.2 The place of Acts 6:1–7 in the book of Acts
The section below provides an overview of Acts.

8.2.1 An overview of Acts
The composition and logical development of Acts can be described in different ways. The work of Peter and Paul can be seen as markers to divide the book into two parts. The geographical spreading of the Gospel described in Acts 1:8 can be used as structure markers to divide the book into three main parts (Wallace 2016:12; Barclay 2003:6). Talbert (2005:v) uses Jesus’ directive in Acts 1:8 as criterion to divide the book into two main parts, of which the last subdivides into two subdivisions. Talbert’s division is used in this chapter. It can be explicated as follows:

a. Reception and preparation for the directive (1:1–24)
b. Execution of the directive
   - First phase (2:1–12:25)
     o Birth and expansion of the church in Jerusalem (2:1–8:4)
     o Expansion to Judea and Samaria (8:5–9:31)
     o Expansion to Antioch (9:32–12:25)

It is clear that according to this division, Acts 6:1–7 forms part of the second main part (2:1–12:25) of Acts. Within the second main part, it is part of the first subdivision, which specifically deals with the establishment and expansion of the church in Jerusalem (8:5–9:31).

8.2.2 Acts 6:1–7 as part of the second main part of Acts (2:1–12:25)
Talbert (2005:57) indicates that the church’s testimony is described in a cycle with three legs in Acts 1–8. Acts 6:1–8:4 is the third leg of this cycle. The other two legs
are found in Acts 1:12–4:23 and Acts 4:24–5:42. The same structure is used in all three parts to convey the history (Talbert 2005:34, 35): all three parts tell how the witnesses of the Gospel are brought before the Jewish Council (4:3; 5:17, 18; 6:12). In all three parts, the witnesses defend their case before the council (4:5–12; 5:27–32; 7:1–54). All three parts relate the response of the council: They discuss the matter (4:16–17) and let the disciples go with a warning (4:21), they refrain from killing the disciples (5:33–39) and let the disciples go after a beating (5:40), they stone Stephan (7:54, 57, 58).

- In all three parts, the apostles and the congregation are strengthened in their faith and the spreading of the Gospel is promoted (4:29–31; 5:11–14; 5:41, 42; 6:7; 8:4).

The structure that Talbert suggests can be extended as follows:

A1   The church grows despite and due to the onslaught from outside (3:1–4:31)

- God reveals himself by means of a miracle that Peter performs (3:1–11)
- This creates the opportunity to spread the Gospel (3:12–26)
- The proclamation elicits the distrust of the spiritual leaders and leads to Peter and John’s capture (4:1–3)
- Many people convert (4:4)
- They are questioned by the Jewish Council (4:5–7), which creates an opportunity to witness (4:8–14)
- The Jewish leaders are not able to keep Peter and the other apostles and they are released (4:15–22)
- The believers praise God because the enemies of God are powerless to interfere with his plans (4:23–28)
- The apostles' boldness increases and the church grow (4:29–31).

B1   The church grows despite and due to the onslaught from inside (4:32–5:14)

- God reveals himself in the unity and mutual love within the congregation (4:32–37)
• The dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira endangers the growth of the church (5:1, 2, 7–9)
• The Lord reveals their lies to Peter, and Ananias and Sapphira die because they lied to the Spirit (5:3–5, 9, 10)
• People have awe for God (5:11, 13)
• The apostles do many wonders (5:12) and the church grows (5:14)

A2 The church grows despite and due to the onslaught from outside (5:15–42)
• The apostles do many wonders (5:15, 16)
• This makes the high priest and the Sadducees jealous (5:17)
• The apostles are thrown in jail (5:18)
• An angel frees the apostles (5:19)
• They receive the directive to proclaim the Word (5:20) and they do so (5:21a)
• The Jewish Council is powerless to keep them and only warns them (5:21–28; 33–40)
• These events create an opportunity to witness (5:29)
• The apostles continue with the proclamation of the Word and the church grows (5:41, 42).

B2 The church grows despite and due to the onslaught from within (6:1–7)
• The growth of the church in Jerusalem and the extent of the ministry has the consequence that the Greek-speaking widows are overlooked in the daily ministry (6:1)
• This causes division between Greek and Aramaic-speaking Jews (6:2)
• The twelve apostles call the congregation together (6:2)
• The problem is solved by electing seven men who are appointed to handle this problem (6:3–6)
• The Word of the Lord spreads (6:7)
• The congregation grows (6:7).

C The church grows despite a seeming successful onslaught from outside (6:8–8:4)
• Stephen spreads the Word, but is stoned and dies (6:8–7:60)
• However, he dies as victor and he prays for his murderers (7:58–60) (Talbert 2005:60)

• He sees Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God (7:55)68

• The persecution after Stephen’s death leads to the Gospel spreading even further (8:4)

It is clear from the above that there was growing aggression from the side of those opposed to the Gospel. It grows from a warning (4:21), to beatings (5:40), to stoning (7:54–58; Talbert 2005:57). The Gospel spreads despite this fierce onslaught.

During these events, there is a special development with regard to God’s involvement. In the first three parts (A1, B1, A2), God miraculously intervenes. In the fourth part (B2), the apostles and the congregation find a solution for a given problem69 without a miracle (see Talbert 2005:60). In the fifth part (C), God is not visibly involved, but allows his servant to die. It seems as if He allows the church to be destroyed. However, it is clear that Jesus Christ uses the seeming defeat as the seed that allows the Gospel to spread further (8:1–4).

The following is clear from the above:

• Luke describes the history of the establishment and growth of the church in Acts, and he does it in a structured manner

• The following themes run through this part:
  o The onslaught from inside and outside to stop the growth of the church
  o The growth of the church despite and even as a result of the onslaught
  o God who miraculously intervenes
  o Jesus who keeps his promise that the Gospel will spread and who rules from heaven in this way
  o Man, who has to take responsibility and who has to look for solutions in the power and with the wisdom of the Spirit
  o The Word of God that is central to the growth of the church (Peterson 2009:232)

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68 The fact that Jesus is standing can mean different things (see Talbert 2005:64, 65). At the very least, it represents Jesus, the Victor’s, involvement with Stephen and what happened to him.

69 In light of the fact that Luke emphasises the work of the Spirit so much in Acts 1 and 2, one can assume that the work of the Spirit in finding a solution is presupposed.
• Luke emphasises the fact that the enemies of the Gospel is becoming more and more aggressive
• The history that is recorded shows a development in God’s involvement
• Acts 6:1–7 describes a second example of the onslaught that the church experienced from the inside and how this onslaught was warded off through the wisdom of the Spirit
• Acts 6:1–7 is part of a well-structured greater whole that describes the history of the church. This structure should be taken into account during the explication of these verses.

8.3 The problem according to Acts 6

In an effort to determine if Acts 6 deals with the institution of the service of deacons, the section below provides and overview of the events. After that, the discussion probes the problem in the congregation and the precise task of the apostles according to Acts 6.

8.3.1 Summary of the events described in Acts 6:1–7

Compare Figure 30: Narratological structure of Acts 6:1–7 (p. 192) for the narratological structure of Acts 6:1–7. If this structure is accepted, it becomes clear that Luke describes a time in the life of the church (followers of Jesus). He states the problem and the cause of the problem, and then he states the proposed solution of the apostles, the agreement of the whole meeting and the execution of the solution. Then the result of the action taken to solve the problem is stated (Koet 2011:87, 88).

The course of events can be described as follows:

8.3.1.1 The problem and its cause

Acts 6:1 tells how murmuring (γογγυσμός) started among Greek-speaking Jews during that specific time (Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις) in the history of the church.
Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις πληθυνόντων τῶν μαθητῶν

ἐγένετο γογγυσμός

τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν

πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους, ὅτι παρεθεωροῦντο ἐν τῇ
diakonía τή καθημερινή αἱ χήραι αὐτῶν.

προσκαλεσάμενοι δὲ οἱ δώδεκα τὸ πλήθος τῶν μαθητῶν

ἐίπον·

οὐκ ἄρεστόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς καταλείπαντας τὸν λόγον

tοῦ Θεοῦ διακονεῖν τραπέζας.

ἐπισκέψασθε οὖν, ἀδελφοί,

ἀνδράς ἐξ υἱῶν μαρτυρουμένους

ἐπτά, πλήρεις Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ

σοφίας,

οὖς καταστήσαμεν ἐπὶ τῆς

χρείας ταύτης· 4

ἡμεῖς δὲ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου

προσκαρτηρήσαμεν.

καὶ ἤρεσεν ὁ λόγος ἐνώπιον παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους·

καὶ ἐξελέξαντο Στέφανον, ἀνδρὰ πλήρη

πίστεως καὶ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, καὶ

Φιλίππων καὶ Πρόχορον καὶ Νικάνορα καὶ

Τίμωνα καὶ Παρμενάν καὶ Νικόλαον

προσήλυτων Ἀντιοχέα,

οὖς ἐστησαν ἐνώπιον τῶν

ἀποστόλων· καὶ προσευχάμενοι

ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας.

Καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἤμεθα, καὶ ἐπληθύνετο ὁ

ἀριθμὸς τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν ἱερουσαλήμ σφόδρα,

πολὺς τε ὀχλὸς τῶν ἱερέων ὑπήκουσιν τῇ πίστει.

Figure 30: Narratological structure of Acts 6:1–7
This dissatisfaction was aimed at the Aramaic-speaking believers. The reason for the unhappiness was that the widows of the Greek-speaking believers were overlooked during the daily ministry (ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ) in one or the other way. They were overlooked because the congregation grew so rapidly (πληθυνόντων τῶν μαθητῶν), increasing the work (Koet 2011:87).

8.3.1.2 The suggested plan to solve the problem

It is not clear whether the apostles previously served the tables or the believers did it spontaneously among themselves and the larger numbers called for a more structured ministry. However, the apostles realised that they cannot do everything alone and that they needed help. After this, they had to get clarity on what their primary task is and what part of their responsibilities they could leave to someone else. The apostles divided the ministry into two parts: On the one hand, the prayers and ministry of the Word of God (τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου) and on the other hand, serving the tables (διακονεῖν τραπέζαις). Both tasks are described with the words διακονεῖν/διακονία.

8.3.1.3 The acceptance and execution of the plan

The apostles called the congregation together, explained the problem to them and suggested that they elect seven men from among them who can be appointed (καταστήσομεν) in relation to this matter (ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης). The apostles could then dedicate themselves to the Word and prayers. This suggestion carried the approval of the congregation and they elected seven men and brought them before the apostles, who laid their hands upon the men after prayer (καὶ προσευξάμενοι ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας.). The appointment of these men removed the obstacle to the spreading of the Word. As far as the narratological structure goes, this part is framed by the description of the growth of the congregation (Acts 6:1, 7). The murmuring of the widows is also central (see Figure 30: Narratological structure of Acts 6:1–7, p. 192).

8.3.1.4 The result of the execution of the plan

The Word of God spread further.
8.3.2 The complaint of the widows
The complaint of the widows was that they were overlooked during the daily ministry (ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ), and the task that the apostles relinquished, is described as the ministry of the tables (διακονεῖν τραπέζαις). The widows did not complain to the apostles directly, but via spokespersons. It may be that they felt that they did not have the right to speak to the apostles directly due to the customs of those times. It may also be that their problem created unhappiness among many of the Greek-speaking members and that the leaders of their group went to speak to the apostles.

8.3.3 The widows and the διακονία
Spencer (1994) says about the widows of the Hellenists:

It is plausible that these Hellenist widows have been cut off from kinship networks in the diaspora and must now depend on local "Hebrew" (Aramaic-speaking) residents for basic economic, practical, and social support. Unfortunately, however, these local systems fail to function adequately for the widows in the critical matter of providing food. (p. 728)

Holwerda and Opperwall (1979–1988) say that a widow in Israel is:

A woman whose husband has died and who has no adult male relative (e.g., husband’s brother, grown son) to serve as her legal protector. The term thus connotes not only the death of a woman's husband but also her abandonment and helplessness. (p. 1060)

Widows were often poor, dependent on public care, and easily exploited. Many people saw widowhood as a shame and a punishment from God (Myers 1987:1056).

Stählin (1964) says about the situation of widows:

From early times the fate most feared and bewailed by a woman was that she should become a widow. When her husband died she could return to her own family if the purchase price was paid back to the husband’s heirs or the dowry to the wife’s family. Otherwise she had to remain in the husband’s family, where she took an even more subordinate and often humiliating position. In many cases she was not allowed to remarry...The common feature is that they have all lost their sustainer and protector. (pp. 441–443)
Kaveney (2005) says about the position of widows in the early church:

The early Church did not limit its involvement with the widows to material support, nor allow them merely passive membership in the community. Through an Order of Widows, the Church recognized the contribution that the widows could make to the well-being and spiritual growth of their fellow believers. (p. 16)

One can deduct from this that the matter that the widows murmured about was certainly the assistance they, as the needy, had to receive and that remained in abeyance (Koet 2011:87). However, Finger (2007:247) offers another perspective. She is of the opinion that the two phrases ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ and διακονεῖν τραπέζαις refer to the service work of the widows. The problem was therefore that the widows among the Greek-speaking believers were excluded from doing service work (διακονία). Viewing Kaveney’s observation above, both interpretations are plausible. The widows were neglected in relation to their physical care, and for that reason they were also not involved in diaconal work. However, Luke provides no clarity about this and for this reason, this matter should not occupy the centre of the explication. The matter that Luke addresses is the consequences of the fact that a vulnerable part of the community were in one way or the other overlooked during ministry.

Over the years a general consensus has developed that the διάκονος- word group carries the primary meaning of physical care (see Collins 1990:5–45; Venter, 1996b:43). The physical care is, according to this view, closely related to serving tables, like a waiter or a slave. Serving the table was seen as willingness to serve in humble dedication and was strongly linked to slavery (see Beyer 1964:81, 92; Louw & Nida 1989:484; Aitchison 2003:84; Njiru 2002:102, 103). However, there has been a choir of voices pleading for a wider understanding of this word group (see Bruce 1977:131; Venter 1996a:51).

The previous chapters have already revealed that, on closer examination, the first-mentioned view does not describe the full extent of the meaning fields for which the word group is used. Webber (2001:2) points this out by referring to instances where Acts describes the distribution of money or food and the concepts διαμερίζω and διαδίδωμι are used instead of διακονέω (see 2:45 and 4:35). Luke does not use
διακονία to describe distribution in the Gospel of Luke either. He does use διαμερίζω to describe the division of Jesus’ clothes (Luke 23:34), διαιρέω to describe the division of the inheritance of the prodigal son (Luke 15:12) and διαιδίδωμι in the directive to the rich young man to divide all his belongings among the poor (Luke 18:22). Acts 2:3 uses the concept διαιμερίζω to describe the division of the tongs of fire on Pentecost. His observation means that the interpretation that διακονία in Acts 6:1 only refers to the distribution of food, is improbable (also see Finger 2007:262).

The following can be deduced from the above:

- The daily ministry during which the widows were overlooked cannot be limited to the distribution of means to the poor based on the meaning of the διάκον- word group.
- Serving tables does not necessarily refer to (only) the provision of food or money.

8.3.4 The widows and the daily διακονία

The believers had everything communally and cared for everyone, especially the poor, from the communal riches.

It is clear from Acts 2 that the following took place daily in the congregation: They gathered at the temple daily (2:46) and received teaching there (5:42) in a public service (prayer – 2:42; see Bruce 1977:81). They gathered in smaller groups in homes every day, where they celebrated the Holy Communion (2:46 – breaking bread) and ate together (2:46 – and enjoyed their food with a simplicity of heart). They were also taught in these smaller groups by the apostles every day (5:42)⁷⁰.

All these aspects of congregational life are described in Acts 6 by means of the διάκον- word group (see Hovius 1951:25).

The practicalities surrounding the events described in Acts 6 can be presented as follows: Every day, a great number of people (6:5) gathered at the temple, including believers, interested people and those who were just curious. Here they were taught

⁷⁰ It is improbable that the apostles attended to each house every day. There could have been between 500 and 1000 house meetings to accommodate more than 5000 (4:4 – 5000 men) people.
by the apostles and they worshipped God in a service (prayers). This part of the ministry is described in Acts 6 as τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου. The language used for this gathering was most probably Aramaic (Bruce 1990:181), which could have created a problem for the Greek-speaking members (Talbert 2005:59, 60; Finger 2007:273). It is also possible that there were synagogues with Greek as the language medium (Bruce 1990:181).

Believers then went from the temple to homes in different smaller groups to eat together, celebrate the Holy Communion and to be taught in the doctrine of the apostles (2:42). This part of the ministry is described in Acts 6 as διακονεῖν τραπέζαις. Friedrich and Bromiley (1972:213) say that the expression διακονεῖν τραπέζαις in Acts 6 is used to distinguish it from τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου and that it should be translated as ‘to see to meals’. However, he still sees ministry in a restricted way. The ministry of the tables most probably included all aspects of the ministry at homes (Gerritsen 1953:58; Versteeg 1982:20; Witherington 2007:31).

Versteeg (1980:50–58) shows from Acts, 1 Corinthians 11 and also 1 Corinthians 10 that the love feast, during which the poor were cared for, and the Holy Communion initially went together. The word τράπεζα (table) has received the meaning of ‘meal’ and is used in this way in Acts 16:33 (Friedrich & Bromiley 1972:209, 213). The Greek-speaking widows had to become involved with a certain house, where they had to be taught and cared for (Witherington 1998:161). It is possible that the apostles took turns to visit the different houses to teach and to make sure that the care is taking place (Koet 2011:87–89). However, the responsibility for teaching and care normally resided with the group itself. Venter (1996a:52) emulates several authors when he compares Acts 2:45 to Romans 12 and deduces from that that the congregation itself was responsible for the distribution of means. Due to the increase in numbers, the apostles could no longer supervise and see to it that this did indeed occur at all home groups, which was the leading cause of the problem of the widows (Acts 6:1). The widows were part of the vulnerable members and dependent on daily care in different areas. They could easily be treated with contempt because of the view that widowhood is a punishment from the Lord. However, Luke does not reveal the nature of the neglect of the widows.
Smith (2003:5) says that the meal in the early Christian church most probably took the form of the ‘banquet’ or ‘symposium’ of the Greek culture. He says: ‘Early Christianity was made up of varied groups, however, who adapted the common banquet tradition to their own situations.’ The banquet was a communal meal that symbolised a special bond between the participants. After meals, participants drank wine and had discussions on certain topics (symposium). In the place of the wine, Christians had the Holy Communion, and in the place of the symposium, the house group was instructed in the doctrine of the apostles (Smith & Tausig 2001:26–32; Keener, 2012). Since eating together was symbolic of the unity and equality of the participants, attitudes that could bring division surfaced during meals. It is not clear whether the neglect of the widows was a deliberate act or whether it was a mere error. The essence of the message that Luke gives is that there was negligence due to the large numbers of believers and the work that escalated as a consequence.

The following is clear from the above:

- Daily ministry included ministry at the temple and ministry at homes
- The ministry at the temple included ministry of the Word and prayers
- The ministry at homes included instruction on the Word, the communal meal, care of the poor and the Holy Communion.

8.3.5 The way in which the widows were neglected

The word παρεθεωροῦντο (6:1) is translated as ‘oor die hoof gesien’ (overlooked) in the 1933/53 Afrikaans translation, and as ‘afgeskeep’ (neglected) in the 1983 Afrikaans translation. In the Dutch online Bible of Word Project, it is translated as follows: ‘...omdat hun weduwen in de dagelijkse bediening verzuimd werden.’ The King James Version and the American Standard Version both translate it with ‘neglected’. Louw and Nida (1989:356) mention another possible meaning, namely ‘disregard’. The word παραθεωρέω has no direct relation to neglect with regard to the care of the poor. The needs of the widows therefore in some or the other way did not receive enough attention in the total ministry. The widows were not treated with respect. Vermaak (2001:577) indicates what a great role identity played at meals. It could be that the Hebrew (Aramaic) members unconsciously or consciously ill-treated the Greek-speaking members in some way. Whatever the oversight, it led to
the widows experiencing it as a problem and the Greek-speaking members complaining about it.

The following is clear from the above:

- None of the words with which the widows' problem is described justifies the conclusion that the widows' problem necessarily involved a lack of a provision of food or money.
- It cannot be established without any doubt what the neglect during the daily ministry of the widows entailed. There are different possibilities:
  - A language problem during the proclamation of the Word at the temple or at homes
  - The widows were not included in a house group and felt marginalised.
  - The house group(s) where they were involved did not function well and they were overlooked during the distribution of food and/or money during the gathering at the homes.
  - They were in a house group that did not receive means to share.
  - The Aramaic Jews, who were the majority, consciously or unconsciously discriminated against them.
- The widows felt neglected and insulted due to this oversight.
- The emphasis in this part is on the fact that there was a problem that could have led to a division in the congregation. What the precise leading cause for the unhappiness was, is clearly beside the point.

8.4 The essence and content of the ministry of the apostles and the seven

The next part looks at the ministry that the apostles reserved for themselves.71

8.4.1 The essence and content of the ministry of the apostles

It is important to determine what service work (τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου) the apostles wanted to focus on. Acts 1:25 clearly shows in the description of an apostle in the place of Judas, that the primary tasks of the apostles was to act as eye and ear witnesses. The new apostle was elected to have a part in this service.

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71 Cf. Collins (2014:152-161) for his view on this topic.
work and apostleship (λαβεῖν τὸν κλῆρον τῆς διακονίας ταύτης καὶ ἀποστολῆς – 1:25). The requirement for one who wants to perform this service is described in verse 21 and 22:

Therefore, it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

When the apostles decide that it is not right that their attention be drawn away from the ministry of the Word, the ‘ministry of the Word’ refers specifically to their eye and ear testimony, during which they acted as authorised representatives of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) (see Firet 1974:40). They were the only ones who could serve the Word as eye and ear witnesses. It is understandable that their testimony was valuable, because Jesus called and equipped them precisely for this task. Should they become too concerned with other things, even teaching from home to home, they could be drawn away from the primary ministry that was entrusted to them, and only to them.\(^{72}\)

In addition to the ministry of the Gospel, they also had to persevere in τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου. The word προσευχῇ means among other things prayer, but it can also refer to a place of worship or the worship service (Greeven 1968:808; Louw & Nida 1989:409). One of the tasks that the apostles wanted to do themselves, was therefore probably the services in the temple (Bruce 1990:183).

This perspective strengthens the view that the seven also proclaimed the Word, but in the smaller groups that gathered in homes (Koet 2011, 87). They possibly specifically taught in Greek (Collins 2005:216), and their proclamation was probably the explanation of the eye and ear testimony of the apostles.

\(^{72}\) Koet (2011:87-89) compares Luke 10:38-42 and Acts 6:1-6 with each other and concludes that Luke deliberately connected the two passages to each other with the word διακονία. From these passages, he shows the connection between the teaching (‘leer’) and works (‘doen’). His conclusion is, ‘De twee twee activiteiten horen bij elkaar, maar het leren, de prediking, gaat vooraf aan de materiële zorg’ [‘The two activities belong together, but the teaching, the preaching, is first and then the material care’]; and ‘leren leidt tot doen’ [teaching leads to works]. (p. 89)
Venter (1996a:50–52) articulates a very common way with which researchers deal with this part: he links Acts 2:42 with Acts 6:4. He finds a ring composition in Acts 2:42:

The congregation persevered in

A1 – The doctrine of the apostles
B1 – And (καί) in the mutual community
B2 – And (καί) in the breaking of the bread
A2 – And (καί) in prayer.

He finds the A–A leg back in Acts 6:4:

But we persevere in:

A1 – The ministry of the Word
A2 – And in prayers.

The apostles delineate their field of work by means of the A–A leg. Venter (1996a:51) then comes to the conclusion that the B–B leg of the ring composition remains and that the seven elected men received the B–B leg of Acts 2:42.

However, in the A–A leg of Acts 2:42, it is the entire congregation that perseveres – not in the ministry of the Word (like in Acts 6:4), but in the doctrine of the apostles. The ministry of the Word and the perseverance in the doctrine of the apostles is not ‘literally the same’ as Venter (1996a:50-51) claims. The ministry of the Word enables the congregation to know the doctrine and to persevere in it, but there is an essential difference between the two actions. The apostles preach (as ear and eye witnesses) and the congregation takes this testimony and considers it and apply it to their lives. They persevere in it this way. It is therefore not valid to make a calculation and to come to the conclusion that Acts 6:4 means that the seven men did not also serve the Word in one way or the other. However, their ministry of the Gospel does differ substantially from that of the apostles in that they apply what they heard from the apostles in their proclamation (see Coetzee 1967:48, 49).

Venter (1996a:50-51) implicitly equates the proclamation to the proclamation of elders and ministers, and the mutual community and breaking of the bread as part of the service of the deacon. However, even in this regard this argument is not
consistent. Elders and ministers can never act as eye and ear witnesses of Jesus’
teaching and life. That which the apostles took as their field of work, cannot be
equated to the work field of the elder and minister.

Venter (1996a:50-51) furthermore limits the ‘breaking of the bread’ to love feasts.
This is not tenable. Van’t Spijker (1980:10) clearly indicates that the love feast and
the Holy Communion could initially not be distinguished and that the breaking of
bread in Acts 2:42 primarily refers to the celebration of the Holy Communion (see
also Coetzee 1967:49; Witherington 2007:30). The fact that the Holy Communion
and the love feast was regarded as inseparable in those times, becomes clear when
Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 that the congregation’s celebration of the Holy
Communion is no longer from the Lord because they act without love during the love
feast. If the B leg in Acts 2:42 describes the work of deacons, the ministry of the Holy
Communion should also be one of the deacons’ tasks (Grosheide 1957:304, 305).

If ‘the breaking of the bread’ is equated to only the love feast, and κοινωνία is the
community, the distinction brought by the καί conjunction (Acts 2:42) does not make
sense. The love feast, which included care of the poor, was such an integral part of
the κοινωνία that Luke could have described the love feast and the mutual
communion with only the word κοινωνία and everyone would have understood that
the love feast was included. However, he makes a deliberate distinction using the
καί conjunction and by means of the ring composition. If the A–A conjunction
denotes two separate, yet related aspects, one could expect that the B–B leg would
also denote two separate, yet related aspects.

When the apostles say that it would not be right if they become involved with serving
the tables and as a result neglect the Word and prayers, they limit their own work
field and not that of the seven men. If the apostles still had to go and preach the
Word from home to home, the new leaders would not have been alleviating the
pressure much. However, it would bring great repose if the apostles could delegate
the home-to-home ministry, which can be clearly distinguished from the ministry at
the temple, to someone else.

The following is clear from the above:
• After the division of work, the apostles focused on conveying the ear and eye witness within the joint services held in the temple
• The task of the seven was to handle the rest of the ministry so that the apostles could continue with their main task without interruption.

8.5 The essence and content of the directive to the seven

It is important to establish what the task of the seven could have been. The following possibilities can be identified:

8.5.1 Officiators (taking the lead)

Acts 6:1–7 is enclosed by two reports that the congregation had grown (6:1 & 6:7). The greater context also indicates that Luke was describing the growth of the church through the proclamation of the gospel (see 2.2). It is clear from both the greater context and Acts 6 that there was a deliberate attempt to stop this growth and that Luke aimed to show how the church grew in spite of and even as a result of this effort. Acts 6:1–7 is a description of the second onslaught, which comes from within the church itself (see 8.2). It has already been established (see 8.2) that Luke describes in Acts 6:1–7 how the church of God, without him granting a miracle, has to ward off the onslaught through the wisdom of the Spirit and has to use it as an opportunity for growth.

The task of the seven should be seen against this background. Their charge was to solve the threat that the dissatisfaction of the widows posed. To do this, they would have had to tackle the management problem brought about by the growing numbers (Barclay 2003:59). Acts 6:1–7 is therefore not in the first instance a description of how the church should treat her widows or the poor or those who are pushed out of the community of love for one reason or the other. It does not primarily deal with the suffering of a group of members. It is rather about the threat that this unhappiness holds for the entire congregation and the proclamation of the Word if it does not receive attention. That is why the whole group of disciples (6:2) are involved in the search for a solution (Finger 2007:265).

A second threat is highlighted by the apostles when they say that it will not be right if they neglect the ministry of the Word to serve tables. This has to do with
management and supervision in the congregation. It has to do with priorities and determining areas of focus for certain gifts and a delegation of responsibilities.

Luke, on the one hand, emphasises the wonderful growth that can occur in the church, but he also makes it clear that problems can come from different directions, both from within or without. In Acts 6:1–7, he describes the management of problems that arose when the congregation in Jerusalem grew fast and the work became too much for the existing officiators. The consequence (symptom) of this problem was that the ministry (διακονία) suffered. In this case, it was neglect of the widows that first became problematic. The apostles could have addressed this symptom by becoming (even more) involved with the ministry at the houses and the ministry of individuals and groups. However, this would have only solved the problem for a time because the real problem would not have been addressed. Another symptom of a real problem would then have appeared – that the apostles would not have been able to minister the Word as they should have and that worship services would have suffered too.

The apostles identified the real problem – the twelve apostles were too few to see to it that the ministry (διακονία) took place effectively. They were led by the Holy Spirit to realise that they had to find competent members (people filled with the Holy Spirit) to help them – this is possible based on the advice that Jethro gave to Moses (see Ex 18; Bruce 1990:182). They solve the real problem by electing more officiators who can assist them so that the ministry (διακονία) can be effective. The next step in the solution of the problem was a work division. The apostles chose the work area that Jesus called and equipped them for and that no one else could do, namely the ministry of the Word as eye and ear witnesses. In addition, they led the worship as it occurred during the worship service.

The seven receive the task of handling the rest of the ministry, which mainly occurred during the gatherings at homes.

That which is said in Ephesians 473 of the officiators (for instance shepherds and teachers), that they are like ligaments that have to allow the body to function smoothly (Breed, Jordaan & Janse van Rensburg 2008:21; see Chapter 2, p. 17), is

73 Compare Kruger (2005:527-553) for the calling and task of the special services in the church.
practically illustrated here. The hitches that occurred in the ministry (διακονία) had to be ironed out by the new officiators (see Du Plooy 2005:564).

8.5.2 A pastoral dimension

It is crucial to study Acts 6:1 in more detail to understand the full extent of the directive to the seven. In Acts 6:3 the apostles say that seven men should be selected that can be appointed ‘in this matter’ (ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης). It has already been established (see 8.3.1, p. 191) that part of ‘this matter’ included the management of and supervision over the ministry in the gatherings that took place at the different homes, with the aim of addressing shortcomings in the ministry. Furthermore, the chapter earlier argued (see 8.3.5, p. 198) that the widows possibly saw the behaviour towards them as insulting. Their murmuring most probably was not only due to the oversight, but also due to the possible attitude (disrespect) that led to the neglect.

It is clear that Luke emphasises the murmuring of the widows by writing about it extensively. The exposition in Figure 31: The murmuring of the widows indicates what aspects of their murmuring he emphasises.

Figure 31: The murmuring of the widows

Murmuring indicates dissatisfaction, even suspicion (White 2016:88). The gravity of the situation lies in the possibility of a rift. If only the oversight received attention, doubt could have remained about the attitude of the Aramaic members towards the Greek-speaking members. It is clear that the possibility of suspicion about attitude and the possible tension between the two groups had to be examined and
addressed before new structures for ministry could even be considered. One can therefore assume that the directive of the seven also had a pastoral dimension with a view to unity in the congregation.

A logical conclusion is that what Ephesians 4 states as the aim of the special services, namely to let the unity of the congregation grow (Kruger 2005:535), was clearly part of the initial directive to the new officiators.

8.5.3 Proclamation of the Word

The explanation and teaching of the apostles eye and ear testimony was probably part of the seven’s task at house meetings (see 8.3.1, p. 191). Witherington (1998:251) offers further confirmation of this observation. He refers to Luke’s literary style. Luke introduces the person who would play an important part in the next part of his description of the history in the preceding part. He calls these persons bridging figures. According to him, Stephen and Phillip are two bridging figures who are introduced in Acts 6:1–7 and who then play an important part in the following parts (see also Talbert 2005:60). The following parts describe how these two persons proclaim the Word and baptise. Phillip is introduced to the reader as a missionary. One can therefore rightly assume that the things they do after the events of Acts 6 formed part of the directive they received in Acts 6.

The training of the congregation, which is the purpose of the special services according to Ephesians 4 (see Kruger 2005:536), was clearly part of what these seven officiators were tasked to do.

8.5.4 Ministering the Holy Communion

The discussion has indicated (see 8.3.1, p. 191) that the breaking of the bread included the Holy Communion, which was inextricably intertwined with the love feast. The seven therefore also had to minister the Holy Communion from house to house.

The following can be deduced from the above:

- The seven are called and confirmed as officiators of the congregation
- Their job included:

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74 Barnabas is introduced in Acts 4:36 to play a greater role from Acts 9 onwards. Saul (Paul) is introduced in Acts 7:58 before he becomes prominent in the following chapters.
o A pastoral function
o Governance – the management of and supervision over the ministry (διακονία) that was entrusted to them
o Care of the poor and promotion of the κοινωνία
o Teaching and application of the testimony of the apostles
o Ministering the Holy Communion

The content of their task shows agreement with the task of the special services as described in Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 5 (see Chapter 2, p. 17; Chapter 7, p. 145).

8.6 The seven in the diaconal service (office)?
Coetzee (1967:44) and Venter (1996a:50) conclude that Acts 6 presents the institution of a new special service based on five factors. These factors are: the congregation is called together, the seven are elected by the congregation, they are brought before the apostles, hands are laid on while they are being prayed for, and they receive a specific directive.

They find confirmation for this conclusion by comparing Acts 6 with Acts 1 and 14. However, Acts 1 and 14 describes the election of people to an existing special service and not the institution of a special service. In both cases, the special services to which the persons are elected are clearly stated. The lack of mention of a permanent special service in Acts 6 is striking.

According to Polhill (1992:182), there are no references to deacons in Acts and the word διάκονος does not appear anywhere in the book. There are references to elders (Acts 11:30; 14:23). Given the development of the ministry structures, the seven were probably a first step in the direction of the appointment of elders, from which deacons later developed.

The fact that hands were laid on the seven plays an important role in convincing Coetzee (1967:44) and Venter (1996a:50) that the seven were confirmed in a permanent special service.

Lange et al. (2008:105) are of the same opinion:

Then the apostles laid their hands on the men, by which act they consecrated and blessed them, and transferred an office with which they had themselves been hitherto invested.
If the meaning and practice of the laying on of hands is examined, it does not necessarily indicate confirmation in a special service. The laying on of hands was a symbolic act showing the participation and involvement of the congregation in the task that has to be completed.

Polhill (1992) says in this regard:

> It is best not to read our current practices of ordination back into the text of Acts with regard to this gesture of hand-laying. In the Old Testament the laying on of hands deals with the transfer of some personal characteristic or responsibility from one person to another, as from Moses to Joshua (Num 27:16–23). The gesture is used in several ways in Acts: in healings (9:17), the gift of the Spirit (9:17; 8:18), and in commissioning to a task (6:6; 13:3). Even in the commissionings the emphasis is not so much on appointment to an office as to designation for a task.

Phillips (2001:154) says that the laying on of hands always symbolised identification with something or someone. In 1 Timothy 5:22 Timothy is warned not to lay his hands on a person too quickly, since he may perhaps become part of someone else’s sin.

It is important to keep in mind that the laying on of hands is used as a symbolic act to single out a person, not only for a special service, but also for a special (one-time/temporary) assignment (Ryken et al. 1998:362; O’Collins & Kendall 1997:144–146; Witherington 1998:251; Talbert 2005:60). Acts 13 describes such a case. In Acts 13:1 Barnabas and Saul are mentioned with others as prophets and teachers in the congregation of Antioch. While they were together one evening to worship the Lord and were fasting, the Holy Spirit gave them the task of singling out Saul and Barnabas for a special assignment (13:2). They had to take the Gospel to the heathens. The congregation then fasted, laid their hands upon the two and sent them to complete this task. Both Barnabas and Saul had already been confirmed in a particular permanent service, but they (again) received the laying on of hands, without any mention of a special service. This laying on of hands is therefore clearly no indication of confirmation in a particular special service, but has to do with the assignment that the congregation sends them on. Nee (1996:125, 126) says that the laying on of hands in Acts 13 carries the meaning of: ‘...their going was the whole church’s going.’ The laying on of hands meant to symbolise that it was not only Saul...
and Barnabas who were going to Antioch, but that the entire congregation was going with them.

The laying on of hands symbolises communication, transfer and reception, not a static transfer, but a continuous interaction with God (Stookey, 2000:147–148). It occurred in a variety of situations. The transfer can be healing (Mark 5:23; Acts 9:12, 28:8), spiritual gifts (Acts 8:19, 19:6), confirmation/being singled out (Acts 6:6; 13:13; 1 Tim. 4:14, 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6) or blessing (Matt. 19:13–17; see Bruce 1990:184, 185). The laying on of hands is also symbolic of the presence of the Holy Spirit (Hamilton 2000:796).

The seven were selected by the congregation, the apostles laid their hands on them and gave them a particular assignment. It is clear from the preceding discussion that one cannot choose between the possibilities of the seven filling these positions permanently or the task as a calling to handle a particular problem based on the laying on of hands. One can to an even lesser extent deduct that churches can derive the institution of a certain special service from these descriptions or can base a job description of a particular service on this text.

What is clear is that the officiators were called by the congregation and were singled out for a special task. They acted in the congregation as authorised persons in the execution of their task. Their calling shows characteristics of the special services that Christ granted his church (Eph. 4). It seems that Acts 6 describes an embryonic service from which the different special services later developed. Du Plooy (2005:563) points out that there is development in the letters of Paul in relation to what he teaches about the special services. Neither Paul nor Luke received a ready-made structure for ministry from the Lord. The Spirit allowed it to develop and showed the way. From the time of Acts 6 to what Paul teaches in Ephesians and the letters to Timothy, much water had to pass under the bridge. It would therefore not be responsible to deduct a worked out duty sheet for the deacon from Acts 6 (see Bruce 1990:182). Nel (2009:7) speaks of natural church development, which is a dynamic process during which a congregation searches for the Triune God’s answers to the questions that he brings into their midst. The answers that they find can develop into orderly structures, as is clear over the course of Acts and the letters of Paul and Peter.
The following ensues from the above:

- Acts 6:1–7 does not provide enough evidence to suggest that the institution of the special service of the deacon is described here
  - The laying on of hands does not always indicate a special service
  - According to Acts 13, congregations elected and singled out people for special assignments without necessarily confirming them in a special service (office)
  - Scripture includes a development in the view of the offices. The election of more officiators offered a solution for a specific problem, and this can be seen as the embryo from which more permanent structures developed.

8.7 Conclusion

One cannot state with certainty that the institution of the special service of deacon is described in Acts 6, nor that this part deals with the institution of any special service. In Acts 6, Luke describes a practical ad hoc rule of order in a congregation. According to the order arrangement, the ministry work was divided so that the apostles could focus on what Jesus called and equipped them for – to be ear and eye witnesses. The new officiators were called and singled out to take on the work that became a problem/need in the congregation. This order arrangement could be the embryo from which the more permanent structures grew.
Chapter 9
The essence and content of the διακονία of the deacon

Synopsis

The working hypothesis of this chapter is that the διακόνοι were called such because they were leaders in the διακονία. In this chapter, the results of the research in the previous chapters will be used together with new research to formulate a theory on the task of the leader-διάκονος according to the New Testament. From this theory, guidelines will be deduced for the work of the deacon of today. The research is therefore an effort to determine as far as possible what the task of the official διάκονος could be.\(^\text{75}\)

9.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the work of the deacon. Because the deacon can play a key role in a ministry plan, it is necessary to determine what the essence and content of the deacon’s work could possibly be according to information in the New Testament. In Chapter 7 (p. 145), it has been shown that Acts 6 cannot be regarded as the description of the institution of the office of the deacon (cf. Pao 2011:129). The question arises what the source for determining the task of the deacon could then be. The word ‘deacon’ is derived from the word διάκονος, which is used for a large variety of persons in the New Testament. It is safe to say, however, that only in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3 is it used as a technical term for a certain leader in the congregation. Nowhere in the New Testament is the content of the work of the διακόνοι explicitly described. The question is why the word διάκονος was used to designate these specific leaders. Probably, there is only one answer to this question, namely that the very essence of what the leaders were doing could be expressed by the semantic content of the διάκονος word group (Van Klinken 1989:58, 59). Collins (2002b:6) points out that a special meaning was attributed to the original Greek word

\(^{75}\) Parts of this chapter have been published in the article, ‘Nuut gedink oor die wese en inhoud van die dienswerk van die diaken’ ['Reconsidering the nature and content of the service of the deacon'] (Breed 2012a).
διάκονος; it was therefore retained also when the Bible was translated into other languages. He says that all the other words in the διάκονος- word group were translated by other words, but that ‘the word deacon was clearly a special case’ (Collins 2002b:6).

The working hypothesis of this chapter is that the διακόνοι were called such because they were leaders in the διακονία. In this chapter, the results of the research in the previous chapters will be used together with new research to formulate a theory on the task of the leader-διάκονος according to the New Testament. From this theory, guidelines will be deduced for the work of the deacon of today. The research is therefore an effort to determine as far as possible what the task of the official διάκονος could be.

In the first place, a few lines from the history of the office of the deacon will be given. Thereafter, a few wrong approaches in determining the essence and content of the diaconal service will be pointed out. Subsequently, Louw and Nida’s approach to semantic domains will be discussed as an introduction to the research on the use of the διάκονος- word group in the New Testament with a view of determining the task of the leader-διάκονος in the New Testament.

Thereafter, a summary will be given of the relevant findings in each of the Scriptural passages that have previously been discussed in the study. In the discussion of each Scriptural passage, deductions will be made about what the original readers possibly had in mind when they called a certain leader in the churches a διάκονος.

In the fifth place, concise guidelines will be given regarding the context in which the διάκονος- word group is used in the Scriptural passages that have been investigated, and what the influence of the context might be on understanding the meaning of the word group there. These guidelines will then be used to formulate a theory on what the essence and content of the work of the deacon could be in the Reformed Churches in South Africa today.
9.2 History of the service or ministry of the deacons

From information in the New Testament, it is clear that several persons were active in the ministry in the churches. Paul refers to different persons as his co-workers (συνεργός; cf. Rom. 16:3; Col. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; Philem. 1:1; Rom. 16:9; Phil. 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:23; 3 John verse 8). In 1 Corinthians 12:28, several gifts are mentioned, amongst others the gift of helping others (ἀντίληψις). Romans 16 contains a long list of people that worked together with Paul in different ways. None of them, however, is described anywhere as a leader in a specific office (cf. also Rom. 12:5–8). It is clear that the ministry in the first congregations was diverse and that a large variety of people was involved in it. From Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3, it is clear that the διακόνοι fulfilled a leading role together with the elders in at least some of the congregations (Hiebert 1983:154).

The institution of a diaconal office is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament or in the first and second century writings (Olson 2005:25). Likewise, the essence and content of the work of the διακόνοι are not described in either the New Testament or the early Christian writings. It is probably the reason why a large variety of traditions has emerged regarding what the work of the deacon ought to be. Collins (2002a:118) describes the story of the deacon in early times as ‘obscure’.

The history of the diaconal service and the different traditions of this service have been thoroughly described from different angles elsewhere (McKee 1989; Van Klinken 1989:60–78; Noordegraaf 1991:61–108; Collins 2002a:2–5; Aitchison 2003:83–105; Olson 2005; Crijns et. al. 2011:114–244).

From these descriptions, a few historical lines could be singled out. In the beginning, the deacons were not subordinate to the elders and there is no evidence in the New Testament that they fulfilled a subordinate role (Van Klinken 1989:60, 61). The content of the work of the deacons is also not described initially, either in the New Testament or in the early Christian writings. Gradually, different traditions emerged regarding the task of the deacon (Van Klinken 1989:61). Little by little, the role of the deacon became subordinate to that of the elder. In some cases, the work of the

deacon was wrapped up in liturgical support; in other cases, the diaconal service was just a passage to the ministry of Presbyter (Van Klinken 1989:65; Noordegraaf 1991:69). At times, the deacon disappeared from some churches (Noordegraaf 1991:74–75; Aitchison 2003:97–99). During the Reformation, the diaconal service was restored to a certain extent, but it was limited to charity and care of the sick (McKee 1989; Van Klinken 1989:66–68; Aitchison 2003:102–104; Van Dam 2016:101–111). Today, a large variety of very different traditions is found regarding the work and the status of the deacon (Epting 2015:217–232; Collins 2009:70). In the Reformed tradition, the work of the deacon is closely connected with the care of the poor and the promotion of κοινωνία in the congregation (McKee 1989).

9.3 Uncertainty about the deacon’s work

Through the years, several authors have referred to the uncertainty about the content of the deacon’s work and the resultant variety of traditions. The following quotations illustrate the variety of opinions on the situation of the diaconal service in different denominations. They are given without comment.

Selby (2012) says:

Sometimes Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox theologians appeal to the authority structures in the early church as justification for their own versions of ecclesial hierarchy. However, the New Testament is notoriously vague on the leadership models of incipient congregations. (p. 79)

Orton (2012) says about the role of the deacon in the ministry of the church:

However, this role has also proved particularly controversial, sparking wide-ranging debates both within individual denominations and between them in wider ecumenical discussions. Indeed, the deceptively-simple question “What is a deacon?” has generated surprisingly diverse responses within different churches at different times and in different places. These responses have also been in a state of flux, as Christians across the world have wrestled with growing understandings of this ministry. (p. 261)

Avis (2009) says:

The diaconate is at the same time the most problematic and the most promising of all the ministries of the Church. Some churches have been agonising about
what a deacon is, while others have begun to discover what a deacon can be...

Most churches have a ministry of deacons, but the form that the diaconate takes varies widely. (p. 3)

Barry (1992) speaks about the confusion in the Roman Catholic Church in America about the work of the deacon saying the following:

The literature pointed to a confusion concerning the diaconate and its mission as the service dimension of Holy Orders. (s.p.)

Shack (2011) says:

Both throughout history and within the Christian church today, the concepts of “deacon” and “deaconess” are by no means universal. Different churches have different understandings of what the terms mean. (p. 51)

Many of the views about the deacon’s work flow forth from inexact exegetical practices, which services as motivation for the exegetical analysis done in this thesis.

9.4 Critical evaluation of points of departure frequently used in literature to determine the essence and content of the diaconal service

Different points of departure that cannot be regarded as legitimate to determine the essence and content of the deacon’s service are now critically reviewed.

9.4.1 Acts 6 as locus for the institution of the diaconal service

Many authors still accept Acts 6 without thorough exegesis as the account of the institution of the diaconal office (Andercheck 2014:19; McKee 1989:66–72; Van Dam 2016:51–59).

It has already been shown that Acts 6 does not describe the institution of a permanent office, that the work of the seven did not necessarily concern charity (only), and that Acts 6 is the description of how a crisis is dealt with inside the congregation. It has been suggested that these findings could offer guidelines for a situation when the work becomes too much for the current leaders.
9.4.2 Wrong understanding of the meaning of the διάκον- word group
In determining the task of the deacon, some authors depart from the point of view that the διάκον- word group in the New Testament is exclusively used to describe humble service, more specifically charity. It has already been shown from the most recent research on this word group that the semantic fields in which it is used are much wider and that the context in which it is used has to play a significant role in the semantic content that has to be assigned to it.

9.4.3 Unmotivated connection of service patterns in the New Testament
The practice of the service of the deacon is frequently based on a few texts that are linked to each other and from which a pattern of ministry is deduced. From Philippians 1 and 1 Timothy 3, it is clear that there were leaders in the congregation that were named by the word διακόνοι (Fowl 2005:20; Van Klinken 1989:57). In both instances, they are mentioned together with the elders. On the one hand, their work is therefore closely connected with that of the elders; yet, it is also distinguished from that of the elders. However, the assumption that these διακόνοι served in the same special service (office) as the seven men (Acts 6) (McKee 1989:69; Sell 2010:62, 63) is merely based on the fact the διάκον- word group is used in both cases (Breed et al. 2008:24). Collins (2002a:88) warns against translating διακόνοι in these two texts by the word ‘deacons’, because it could lead to the practice that the current view of the diaconal office is read into the text.

The διάκον- word group is used in the New Testament to describe a wide variety of ministries. The seven men (Acts 6) are not called διακόνοι anywhere and the content of the service of the διακόνοι of Philippians 1 and 1 Timothy 3 is also not described anywhere. These explanations frequently run up against the problem with the women that are mentioned in 1 Timothy 3, as well as with Phoebe, who is called a διάκονος. It leads to the practice that in different places, the same word from the διάκον- group is translated and explained differently without any grounds. One Scriptural section is then used to determine the service of the deacon, but the other is overlooked without any motivation. An example is that it is frequently accepted without much ado that Philippians 1:1 refers to deacons, but then the word
διάκονον in Romans 16:1 is translated by ‘servant’, with the result that Phoebe is not considered as a deacon (cf. 1933 ASV; KJV).

De Klerk and Dreyer (2007:213) state that the essential characteristics of congregations according to the New Testament are divided into four ministries, namely kerugma, leiturgia, koinonia and διακονία. They refer to Acts 2:42–47 to motivate this statement. However, not one of these ministries is indicated separately as διακονία in Acts 2:42–47. It is clear that the authors equal the breaking of the bread to διακονία without any motivation and that they limit διακονία to charity. Struwig (2004:3) indicates that koinonia also included care of the poor; he regards διακονία as the mutual care of members. Διακονία then is the ‘praktiese voortvloeisel’ ['practical outcome'] of koinonia (Struwig 2004:25). Thus, διακονία and koinonia merge.

Scriptural sections that are frequently used as a clear basis to determine the essence and content of diaconal service have to be considered carefully. It has to be made sure whether ministry patterns described in the New Testament can at all be accepted as normative for the ministry today. Before a certain ministry pattern can be regarded as normative for the ministry today, it must be shown clearly that it is not only described, but also prescribed (cf. also McKee 1989:71; Sell 2010).

9.4.4 Scriptural sections describing humble service or service of love are used without motivation as the foundation for determining the essence and content of diaconal service

In the context of the previous two points of departure, some researchers use all sections in the Bible that describe humble service or service of love to describe the essence and content of the deacon’s service. Some researchers have the view that all the words and deeds of Jesus can be studied to determine the essence and content of the deacon’s service (Combrink 1968:37,165; Pascal 1992:747; Van Wyk 2009:21). According to this viewpoint, the diaconal service and the deaconry as field of study are determined by referring to several texts that deal with the ability to serve (Venter 1996a, 1996b). These texts are studies with the presupposition that διακονία (and therefore the deacon’s service) describes charity as part of koinonia (Goeder 2006:34). Scriptural sections such as Romans 12:8–21 are regarded as
descriptions of the work for which the deacons must equip the congregation (Breed et al. 2008:24; Venter 1996a:53). Although Romans 12:8–21 contains instructions on mutual love and love for the outside world, nowhere in the section Paul says he is describing the diaconal function of the congregation.

Collins (1990), in his research on diaconal service, gives attention only to the Scriptural sections in which the διάκονος- word group appears and disputes the validity of studying John 13, for example, as a description of the διακονία of Jesus. His reason is that John does not describe this action of Jesus as διακονία (cf. also Gooder 2006:50). Hentschel (2007:1) affirms this view by saying that the understanding of the German Protestant churches of διακονία is wrongly based on ‘texten zum Thema Nächstenliebe’ rather than on studying the Greek word διακονία. Another group of researchers emphasise that a word study of the διάκονος- word group is indeed important, but that the semantic fields of this word group have to be determined in the light of the wider Scriptural context. The semantic field in which the διάκονος- word group is used has to be determined every time by thorough exegesis of the Scriptural section in which it occurs (Barnett 1995:21–24; Clarke 2000:240; Craighill 2006:3; Gooder 2006:50, 51).

In this chapter, the latter viewpoint is supported and it will now be further investigated. In the previous chapters, it has been shown through thorough macro- and micro-analysis of the structure that analysis of the context in which the διάκονος-word group is used is necessary to determine the semantic possibility in which the word is used there.

9.4.5 Conclusion

From the previous discussion, the following facets seem to be important for further reflection on the subject:

- No Scriptural section describing service of love can be used without ado to determine the essence and content of the service of the deacon.
- Circumspection is necessary when relating scriptural sections to each other with a view of determining the essence and content of the deacon’s service.
- No clear task description for deacons is given in the New Testament.
• It is indeed clear that people came forward as leaders in the early church and took the lead with regard to facets of the διακονία that could not be dealt with by the apostles or the elders. They were called διάκονος and their work was indicated as διακονία.

9.5 The ‘distinctive’ meaning of the διάκονος-word group

Burton (1891) says:

The study of words is by no means the whole interpretation. No language, unless it be that of a mathematical formula or a logical definition, conveys in the words expressed all the thought which it represents in the mind of the speaker or even all that it is intended to create and actually does create in the mind of the intelligent hearer... The interpreter who confines himself to mere word-study must often miss the richest and best of his author's thought. (p. 135)

It is important to state the insights of Louw and Nida (1989) into the use of words. They divide words into different semantic domains and explain the division as follows:

The basis for the various semantic domains and subdomains consists of three major classes of semantic features: shared, distinctive, and supplementary. The shared features are those elements of the meaning of lexical items which are held in common by a set of lexical items. The distinctive features are those which separate meanings one from another and the supplementary features are those which may be relevant in certain contexts or may play primarily a connotative or associative role.

They give a further explanation of the use of words:

What is essential is that one does not confuse the meaning of a term with the particular reference which a term has in a specific context. For example, ὄρνις (4.38) may be defined as “any kind of bird, wild or domestic,” but in Mt 23:37 (the only occurrence of ὄρνις in the New Testament) it probably refers to a hen, and therefore may be translated as such. But the meaning of ὄρνις is not “hen” but “a bird of any kind, either wild or domesticated,” since it is used in Hellenistic and Classical Greek with precisely such a broad range of reference.
In a similar fashion, θήχη (6.119) may be translated in Jn 18:11 as ‘sheath,’ since the context refers to putting a sword in its container. This does not mean that θήχη means ‘sheath,’ for θήχη designates ‘any receptacle into which an object is customarily placed for safekeeping.’

The research results of John N. Collins and Ani Hentschel, who show that the διάκονος-word group does not primarily or always indicate humble service or charity, are widely accepted. Their finding is that the ‘distinctive’ meaning (also called the ‘denotative’ or ‘designative’ meaning by Louw and Nida) of the διάκονος-word group is not humble service or charity, but ‘go-between’, ‘envoy’, ‘representative’ or ‘spokesperson’. Certain further possible meanings (shared and supplementary) of this word group in the New Testament are to be excluded, according to Collins. His most prominent exclusions are that the word group does not indicate service done out of love for people and that it only refers to service that is performed by an ordained person in the church. In previous chapters, a motivation was given why his conviction cannot be accepted. Collins and Hentschel therefore suggest a new distinctive (denotative or designative) meaning of the word group, namely ‘go-between’, ‘envoy’, ‘representative’, spokesperson’. This point of view means that the semantic content of the διάκονος-word group is not entirely neutral and does have to be determined by the context only.

In the most recent edition of the authoritative dictionary of Arndt, Danker and Bauer (2000), a far-reaching change occurs in the explanation of the meaning of the διάκονος-word group in comparison with that of earlier editions. In the place of the strong emphasis on humble service of love, the meanings of ‘go-between’, ‘spokesperson’ and ‘representative’ are now preferred.77

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77 The previous explanation has emphasised that the διάκονος-word group primarily means ‘service at the table’ and ‘humble service’.
Διακονέω:
- acting as go-between or agent (Mark 10:45; Philem. 13:2; 1 Cor. 8:19; 2 Cor. 3:3)
- performing a specific task for which you have been sent (Acts 19:22)
- performing an official task (1 Tim. 3:10)

Διακονία:
- service as a go-between, mediation, an assignment (2 Cor. 9:12; Rom. 15:31)
- a service rendered to someone (Eph. 4:12; Luke 10:40)
- the office of apostles and prophets (Acts 1:17,25; 20:24; 1 Cor. 12:5)
- something sent to someone to support the person (Acts 11:29)
- a certain supporting task for which someone is called (Acts 6:2)

Διάκονος:
- someone that serves as a go-between in a transaction, agent, courier (2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Cor. 11:23; Col. 1:7)
- someone that receives the assignment to proclaim the gospel (Col. 1:23; Eph. 3:7)
- someone that is sent to perform a specific task (Rom. 12:1)

9.6 The use of the διάκονος- word group to determine the task of the deacon

One can ask the question if it is possible to establish the task of the deacon from the study of the διάκονος- word group. Avis (2009) and Shack (2011) motivate the possibility to accomplishing this goal:

Avis (2009) says:

The New Testament provides neither precept nor precedent that fills in the content of diaconal ministry, what we do have is examples of the actual usage of διάκονος- words in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letters. How can the Church relate to this usage, how can it connect with it? ... To have integrity our own use of διάκονος and διακονία should be consonant with New
Testament usage of those terms; it should resonate with it and be empowered by it. (p. 4, 5)

Shack (2011) investigates the use of the διάκονος word group in the New Testament to establish the task of the deacon today.

The starting-point of this investigation into the meaning of the διάκονος word is now explained. Every word has lexicographical semantic possibilities. A writer or a speaker can have one or more of these semantic possibilities in mind when he or she uses a word in a specific context. The reader or hearer can only establish from the context which one of these semantic possibilities is in the mind of the writer/speaker. A writer can assign a unique semantic possibility (concept) to a certain word in his work.

In this study, we will also look at the possibility to use the results of the exegesis of passages where the διάκονος word group is used to come to a theory about the possible content and essence of the work of the διάκονος as leader in the congregation. First, we will only look at the noun διάκονος. Thereafter, a synthesis will be made of the results of the research as have been described in the previous chapters of this study with a view to determine the different semantic possibilities in which the διάκονος word group occurs. Finally, different themes will be identified from the research results.

9.6.1 The use of the noun διάκονος

Voitila (2015) says the following about the use of διακόνοι in sources other than the Bible:

In the literary sources, we mostly encounter them as servants and slaves, but we also find messengers, letter bearers, cooks, temple servants, tasters, (steersman’s) attendants, cupbearers, public agents/buyers and organisers. (p. 217)

Hentschel (2015) says that a διάκονος acted with the authority of the person that he or she represents:
The term διάκονος in such a context is different from the designation “slave” in that διάκονος gives no indication of the social status of the commissioned person. A particular characteristic of the usage is that the term διάκονος can apply equally to kings, priests, ordinary people or slaves—and independently of gender—without any implication for their social status. (p. 192)

The noun διάκονος occurs thirty times in the New Testament. The semantic possibilities in which it is used vary from serving food and drinks (Mark 1:31) to the proclamation of the gospel (Eph. 3:7). In the gospels, it is only found in the description of Jesus of the attitude that his followers should have in their mutual relationship (Matt. 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43; John 12:26) and as officers serving at a wedding (John 2:5, 9) or at the court of the king (Matt. 22:12, 13). In Romans 13:4, the authorities are referred to as the διακόνοι of God. In Galatians 2:17, the question is asked if Christ would be a διάκονος of sin, as those that are justified in Him are still sinning. Several persons are called a διάκονος of Christ or of God (2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:7; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:6), a διάκονος in the Lord (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7), a διάκονος of the gospel (2 Cor. 3:6; Col. 1:23, 25), or a διάκονος of a congregation (Rom. 16:1). The word is also used to point out the contrast between the work of God in the lives of believers and the work of the apostles (1 Cor. 3:5). In addition, a servant of the Satan is indicated by διάκονος (2 Cor. 11:15). Leaders (deacons) in the congregation are referred to as διακόνοι as well (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12). In most of these cases, the διάκονος is in the service of someone to perform a certain task for that person or in proclaiming the gospel.

O’Brien (1991) points out:

Significantly, in many of Paul’s references it is one of a series of designations (cf. συνεργός, ἀδελφός, κοινωνός, and ἄποστολος) used of his associates in his missionary activity. (p. 48)

In most cases, the ministry of the διάκονος has as its goal service to other people.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Hentschel (2015) investigates Paul’s use of the word διάκονος in 2 Corinthians to defend his apostleship. She rightly shows that Paul emphasises the fact that he acts as a representative of God and Christ and that his authority is vested in this fact. However, one cannot agree with her statement when she says, ‘The word group is
The previous arguments help the researcher on his way to understand what the different semantic possibilities are in which the word διάκονος is used in the New Testament. It is important, however, to investigate the two sections in which the word is probably used to describe the official ministry of the διάκονος; thus, a better insight could be gained into what the essence and content of the work of the διάκονος were.

9.6.2 The use of the word διάκονος to indicate leaders in the congregation

From the results of this study, it has become clear that the διάκον- word group describes the service of several leaders. In Mark 8–10, Jesus teaches the disciples, who would eventually be called ‘apostles’, about the attitude of a follower of Jesus. In Mark 10:42–45, Jesus uses the διάκον- word group to provide equipment that refers to leaders in the congregation (those that want to be great and want to be first). He contrasts the leadership of the world’s rulers with the leaders among his followers and He relates the attitude of the leaders among his followers to the purpose of his own coming to the earth.

Although John talks to all the followers of Jesus in John 12:26, Peter and the disciple Jesus loved is described as leaders in John. In Chapter 2 (p. 17), it has been shown that a connection can be made between the διάκονος that is described in John 12:26, what is said in John 13 and the instruction Jesus gives to Peter in John 21. It has been found that Peter’s διακονία as leader is described in John 21. In 1 Corinthians 12, the variety of gifts, διακονία and the powerful work that the Spirit gives to the congregation are described. Part of this variety is also the leaders (12:28) in the congregation.

basically not capable of expressing a willingness to help or benevolence’ (p. 191). Three times Paul uses his care and love for the congregation as part of the proof that he performs his διακονία in accordance with his assignment in contrast with his opponents. In 2 Corinthians 5:13, he says that whatever he does is for their sake and that he is compelled by the love of Christ to do it. In 2 Corinthians 6:11–13, he says that his heart is open to them and that they should also open their hearts to him. In 2 Corinthians 12:15, he declares his abundant love for them. He therefore performs his διακονία as an envoy of God in obedience and accountability to God, but he also does it out of love for the congregation. Furthermore, in Corinthians 4:5, he declares that he is a slave of Jesus for their sake (ἐαυτοῦς δὲ δούλους ύμῖν διὰ Ἱησοῦν). His ministry as διάκονος is therefore also aimed at their benefit.
9.6.2.1 1 Timothy 3:8–13

Paul starts his prescriptions for the character of the leader-deacon by listing nine qualities. Of these nine qualities, six are directly parallel to the qualities that have to be present in the elder. These two lists agree in so many respects because they do not describe the tasks of the elder and the deacon, but their characters. ‘Both the office of church leader and the office of church worker require the same type of person: a mature Christian whose behavior is above reproach.’ (Cf. Knight 1992:151). One important difference between the two lists is that it is not required of the deacon to teach.79 Lange, Schaff and Van Oosterzee (2008) comment on this difference:

As teaching and preaching were not the usual charge of the deacons, they must so much the more upbuild others by their action; and without this personal faith and conscientiousness they could not fulfil their difficult task. (p. 41)

The requirements for the deacon are described amongst others by the word σεμνός. Σεμνός has the following semantic possibilities: ‘noble’, ‘worthy’, ‘esteemed’. Because it is frequently associated with the divine, it could also mean the following: ‘majesty’, ‘dignity’ and ‘awe’.

Paul adds three negative characteristics that should not be part of the deacon’s character. All of them are associated with self-control with regard to what you are saying, drinking and the desire for money. Furthermore, ‘they must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience’ (NIV). They must therefore have an in-depth knowledge of the truth of the gospel, embrace it and live up to it in faith. Before anyone can become a deacon, he must go through a trial period. Lea and Griffin (1992) explain:

The use of the present tense for “be tested” implies testing over a period (i.e., “let them continue to be tested”). The testing may not be so much a period of probation as a continual testing so that when deacons are later needed they may come from the available worthy group. (p. 117)

79 For a comparison between the requirements for elders and deacon and the opponents in 1 Timothy, see Mounce (2000:156–158).
It is therefore necessary to make sure that he or she is worthy of the service. A male διάκονος must have one wife only and rule his house well. Διακόνοι that serve well gain an honourable place in the community and they grow in their boldness in faith.

Regarding the women to whom verse 11 refers, a difference of opinion exists whether they were the wives of the διακόνοι or whether they were helpers or deacons themselves. If the former would be true, they were probably closely involved in the service of their husbands and therefore had to conform to certain requirements. It is not important for this study to consider this issue. All viewpoints confirm that women were involved in the service of the διακόνοι in some way. In summary, it can be stated that although this section does not say something directly about the content of the deacon’s work, it nevertheless addresses the essence of their work.

It is clear, on the one hand, that the διακόνοι and the women fulfilled an important function, which demanded high standards from them; on the other hand, they benefited from their work as it promoted their personal development.

9.6.2.2 Philippians 1:1

The most important deduction from this verse is that the congregation of the Philippians had a well-established structure with elders and διακόνοι that acted as leaders. O’Brien (1991) is of the opinion:

In the expression σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις the preposition σὺν (‘with’) is to be taken inclusively, ‘to all the saints, including the overseers and deacons’, not exclusively, that is, ‘to all the saints together with the overseers and deacons’, for the latter implies that they are not to be numbered among ‘all the saints in Christ Jesus’. (p. 48)

From Philippians 1:1, nothing further of importance can be concluded for this study.

80 ‘Essentially four positions have been taken: (1) The women are inherently part of the διάκονοι, (2) they are ‘deaconesses’ distinguished from but comparable with the διάκονοι, (3) they are female assistants to the διάκονοι, or (4) they are the wives of the διάκονοι’ (Knight 1992:171).
9.6.2.3 Conclusion

These two sections do not provide the researcher with sufficient information to determine the essence and content of the service of the διάκονος. It is therefore necessary to revisit the different Scriptural sections that have been investigated and to consider the potential (semantic possibilities) in which the διάκονος word group is used in those sections. In each context, the author has actualised a unique semantic possibility. Through research, an effort has been made to determine the unique meaning in which the word group is used in those sections every time. To obtain an overview of the different semantic possibilities in which the word group is used in the sections investigated the results of the research will now be briefly summarised. It is therefore an effort to develop a conceptual frame of reference from the different semantic possibilities in which the words in those sections are used.

9.6.3 Synthesis of the exegetical results from previous chapters

A synthesis will now be made of results in previous chapters. These results will be used to come as closely as possible to an answer to the question what the essence and content of the διακονία of the διάκονος could possibly be according to the sections investigated. When the semantic possibilities in which the διάκονος word group occurs are taken into account the research question can be formulated as follows: What image could the word διάκονος possibly have evoked in the author and reader of that specific section; or, what concept of a διάκονος could possibly have lived in the mind of the authors and readers; and, what semantic possibility or possibilities that are part of that concept are actualised in a specific Scriptural section? From the answers to these questions, conclusions will be made about the possible essence and content of the work of the διάκονος.

9.6.3.1 Ephesians

From the research on the meaning of the διάκονος word group in Ephesians, it has become clear that the Triune God executes his eternal plan through the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who makes it possible for people to be freed from the power of the prince of evil and from their own sinful desires and live a new life in Christ. The church came into existence through the fundamental work of the apostles. The purpose of the church is to exist to the praise and glory of God’s grace
and to make the wisdom of God known to all in this world. The purpose of the church can also be described as the continuous performance of the good deeds that God has prepared for them as part of their lives. Through the good deeds the Lord can bring people to faith and make them part of the congregation.

The διακονία of all believers plays a vital role in the execution of God’s plan to unite all things under the one head Christ. The διακονία of the apostles was used by God to establish the church; the διακονία of the special services (offices) is used by God to equip believers for their service. The διακονία of the believers is used by God to promote the church’s growth to maturity. The διακονία of the church is the ministry of the grace that Christ measures out to every one of them. Christ gives special gifts to the church to equip them for their διακονία. When believers are equipped for their διακονία and they do it, they grow to maturity to become increasingly like Christ and less vulnerable to the temptation of false doctrine. When they grow to maturity, they will talk to each other in truth and in love (admonish and encourage). The edification process is characterised by love. When believers use their gifts, the congregation is bound together in a unity according to the plan of God, and God reveals his wisdom and the glory of his grace to them. The imperative that demands a certain life-style from the believers (Eph. 4:17) is based on knowledge of Christ (the indicative of the work of the Triune God). The equipment of the believers to perform their service enables them to break with the old human being, to renew their thinking, and to make the new human being a reality in their words and deeds.

The essence of the διακονία, according to Ephesians, could be the execution of God’s eternal plan to unite all things under the one head Christ. It comprises that the διάκονος, who has received Christ’s grace, must in turn serve it to others through the works of his διακονία. He does this in the view of the edification and growth to maturity of the church.

The content of the διακονία could be the practical good works that are performed. It could comprise the fulfilment of unique functions in the congregation, for which everyone has received gifts, the equipment provided by the leaders, telling the truth to each other in love, and living worthy of your calling.
9.6.3.2 The Gospel according to John

Two chapters in this study have dealt with the use of the διάκονος- word group in John.

9.6.3.2.1 Διακονία understood as making Jesus and the Father visible

In John, a two-tiered narrative can be detected. The one part of the narrative deals with what can be seen and experienced by all people through their senses. The other part of John’s narrative deals with what is implied by the visible and experiential reality, but not observable to all people. Jesus came to make this hidden truth known through the words of the Father, which He – Jesus – spoke, and through the deeds that He did. In this way, He revealed the Father, whom no one except Jesus has seen yet. Only those that are reborn through the Spirit, can observe, understand and believe this revelation. The others persevere in their unbelief. Those that believe participate in the unity that is found between the Father and the Son. They become followers (disciples) of Jesus and start to serve Him and the Father (διάκονέω). Those that serve Him, follow Jesus by doing his work and speaking his words. In and through their service, Jesus and the Father are revealed to people that see and hear them.

The essence of the διακονία could be representing God and making visible who God is in word and deed.

The content of the διακονία could be a life in which the διάκονος demonstrates by his or her deeds and words, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the obedience of Jesus to the Father and his love.

9.6.3.2.2 John 12

John 12 places the διάκονος of Jesus Christ in the new era, which arrived with the suffering or death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Anyone who wants to serve Jesus (διάκονέω) must follow Him. Following Jesus essentially means to receive the task that Jesus had received from the Father and to continue it. It means that the διάκονος has to speak the words of Jesus and to do the deeds of Jesus. In John 12, following Jesus is connected with the death of Jesus, of which the purpose was to save many. The διάκονος must be prepared to follow Jesus to death. He must be
willing to lose his life to regain it. In this way, the διάκονος becomes involved in the salvation of many that will be drawn to Jesus through his words and deeds. Two promises are given to the one who serves Jesus and therefore follows Him. He will be where Jesus is, which means, in his relationship with the Father and the Son, he will be where Jesus is in his relationship with the Father. The second is that the Father will honour him. The suffering and the dishonour that he experiences because of his διακονία will stand in contrast to the honour that he will receive from the Father. The διάκονος glorifies Jesus and the Father, and is glorified by Jesus and the Father.

The essence of διακονία could be following Jesus where He is waiting in anticipation of the honour the Father gives.

The content of the διακονία could be following Jesus by doing practical deeds with a view to lead people to Jesus, even if it would require you to sacrifice your life.

9.6.3.3 Mark 8–10

In chapter 6 on the use of the διάκονος word group in Mark 10:42–45, it has become clear that Mark guides his leaders to understand διακονία as an open and compassionate attitude towards other people and even to those that are not entitled to it at all. In Mark 8–10, Jesus is preparing his disciples with great patience to act as leaders. The most important attitude they as leaders have to adopt, is not be rulers, but servants. This teaching stands in contrast to that of the world’s rulers that are reigning over their subjects. Trusting that God will let them be first in the life hereafter, they can be the servants of all and become the slaves of all. In this way, they will follow Jesus, who did not come to be served, but to serve, and gave his life as ransom for many. Diaconal service stands in the light of the reconciliation that Jesus brought about by the ransom He paid.

The essence of διακονία according to Mark 8–10 could be the open and compassionate attitude found in a διάκονος, who as an envoy of God does not want to rule over others, but wishes to serve them.

The content of the διακονία according to Mark 8–10 could be the deeds that bear testimony to openness and compassion and do not seek to rule over others.
9.6.3.4 1 Peter 4 and 5

Peter writes a pastoral letter to people that endure intense hardships. He guides them with his letter to live in the midst of rejection and persecution according to their new identity and calling as renewed people. To achieve this they must show mutual friendliness and hospitality. They must understand that they are managers of God's multi-coloured grace by serving each other according to the gifts each of them has received. Those that have received gifts of teaching, have to speak the words of God. Those who have received the work of practical service must perform it in the strength of God. The elders must take care of the congregation like shepherds and supervise them with the attitude that Christ taught his disciples. The whole congregation must humiliate themselves under the powerful hand of God and serve each other in anticipation that God will exalt them at the right time.

The essence of the διακονία according to 1 Peter 4 and 5 could be the attitude of openness found in people that humbly take care of others and do not seek their own interests or rule, and are acting in anticipation of the exaltation that God gives.

The content of the διακονία could be, as a manager, to serve the multi-coloured grace of God to the congregation to enable them to persevere in the midst of hardships.

9.6.3.5 1 Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12 has been investigated in view of ministry to children as representative of groups in the congregation that could possibly be 'outsiders'. The work of the Holy Spirit takes a central position in Corinthians 12. He brings people to the confession that Jesus is Lord. This confession serves as a measure whether someone is led by the Spirit. The one God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is involved in distributing the gifts, the instruction to do διακονία and the powerful work that creates everything in everyone when the gifts are used to perform diaconal service. The διακονία is done to edify the body of Christ. The diversity found in the body is bound together in a unity by the διακονία that each member does and receives. The apostles, prophets and preachers occupy a special place in activating the gifts for service.
Children as part of the congregation ought to receive special attention, because they are more vulnerable (weaker) than other members of the congregation are in some respects. They must also be seen as members of the body that God has placed in a specific location and that each of them can make a special contribution to the edification of the congregation. The fact that unity of the body that is served because each member sees himself as a necessary yet dependent member of the body is strongly emphasised in 1 Corinthians 12. The relationship between gifts, service and the powerful work of God, which brings everything in everyone in existence, is also singled out. When members use their gifts to perform service, God works in a powerful manner to bring about rebirth, faith, diligence and commitment in people and congregations.

The essence of διακονία according to 1 Corinthians 12 could be that it flows forth from the fact that the Spirit gives gifts and that God works powerfully through them to bring about everything in everyone. The διακονία is built on the confession that Jesus is Lord, which contrasts to a life in the power of mute idols.

The content of the διακονία could be active and intimate involvement with other members of the congregation, the utilisation of gifts to edify the congregation and the reception of the ministry by other members.

9.6.4 Semantic possibilities in which the διάκονος- word group is repeatedly used in the sections investigated

When the different semantic possibilities in which the διάκονος- word group occurs in the sections investigated, are compared to each other, it is clear that different authors use the word with concurring semantic possibilities. In the analysis below, the sections in which the same semantic possibility is actualised by the author are combined to identify the different concepts (themes) that have been applied to the διάκονος- word group.

9.6.4.1 Διακονία and following Jesus are frequently closely connected

| Mark 10:45 | John 12:25 | 1 Peter 4:10 | 1 Peter 5:4 |
In Chapter 7 (see p. 145), it has been shown that Mark describes the teaching of Jesus to his disciples in Mark 8–10. Jesus guides them patiently to understand what his service comprises. According to Mark 10:42–45, when Jesus describes what the attitude should of his followers should be if they want to be leaders, He uses the διάκονος words. He who wants to become great among them must become the servant (διάκονος) of others. Jesus then uses his own service as motivation why one should become the servant of all saying, ‘... the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45—NIV). It is clear that his message to them is to follow Him in his service. In chapter 2 and chapter 3, it has been shown how Jesus is drawing his disciples, and anyone that wants to serve Him, into the new era that has arrived. Whoever wants to serve Him (διακονέω) has to follow Him. Service and discipleship can never be separated. With his or her service, the disciple must make the Father and Jesus, who cannot be seen, visible just as Jesus revealed the Father through his words and deeds.

In his pastoral letters to foreigners and sojourners, who suffer very much, Peter continuously holds Jesus up as the one that should be followed. 1 Peter 4 and 5 are no exceptions. Directly after Peter has written about the διακονία of the believers to each other, he again encourages them to follow Christ. In 1 Peter 5, the shepherds of the flock are encouraged to expect the Chief Shepherd, who will reward them because they have been obedient to his instructions.

The concept of a διάκονος in the mind of the writers mentioned above can thus be that it is somebody who follows Jesus in his attitude as servant and in obedience to the Father, making Christ visible through word and deed.
9.6.4.2 The διάκονος of Jesus performs his or her service by understanding and embracing the grace of the Triune God

| Mark 8–10 | John 12–21 | Ephesians 1–4 | 1 Peter |

In Chapter 6 (p. 124), it has been shown that Barthimaeus is depicted as the ideal disciple. He knows Jesus as the Son of David, who serves the grace of God to others. The depiction of his discipleship stands in contrast to the blindness of the disciples and others to the true identity of Jesus. He therefore does not allow the people to silence him and continues to plead with Jesus for mercy despite the opposition of the crowd.

In the Gospel according to John, there is mention from the beginning of those that accept Jesus as the light of the world and those that reject Him. In the description of this Gospel of the actions of Jesus, people are repeatedly placed before the choice of accepting or rejecting Jesus. Some understand the revelation that is enclosed in the words and deeds of Jesus; others remain in the dark and are only able to see and hear the concrete deeds and words. In John 13–17, it is described how Jesus concentrates on teaching those that believe that the Father has sent Him, and therefore see the revelation of God’s glory and share in the unity between Father and Son. After the resurrection of Jesus has been described, it is shown how He guides the disciples, in the light of his resurrection, to further insight into God’s grace and their task with regard to it. In the entire description of this teaching, the Holy Spirit plays an important role. He will remind them of everything that Jesus has said and done and teach them the things that they will still be unable to understand before the ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4 is connected with the previous chapter, and in particular to chapter 3, by the word οὖν in verse 1. What is said in verse 1 is said on the grounds of the preceding teachings. Because they are true, the believers’ conduct of life must be worthy of their calling. The previous chapters describe God’s redeeming grace through which people are saved and the church is brought into existence. In chapters 1 and 3, Paul (the author) prays that the believers will understand what God’s grace has in store for them in their lives. He prays that they will know what their calling is, that they will understand what the inheritance of God is among the
saints and how great God’s power is that is working in them. He also prays that they will understand the full scope of the love of Christ. In Ephesians 4, he describes the διακονία of the believers and what place it has in the eternal plan (economy) of God. Without the knowledge of the indicative as described in Ephesians 1–3, the imperative of chapter 4 and further can never realise. The service (διακονία) and the equipment for the service flow forth from the knowledge of God’s work of grace.

Peter takes his readers back to their identity in Christ with the aim of encouraging them and equipping them for their lives in the midst of suffering. 1 Peter 4:10 builds on these exhortations and confirms to the readers their identity as managers of God’s rich grace. They have to use their gifts of grace to serve each other. Knowledge of God’s grace is therefore seen as the foundation of their service.

The concept of a διάκονος in the mind of the writers mentioned above can thus be someone who has grown in his comprehension and embracing of the grace of God, someone who can lead the congregation in understanding, embracing and living out of God’s grace.

9.6.4.3 The attitude of full subjection to the will of God is frequently connected with the attitude of the διάκονος

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The word group is used in coherence with the deed of reconciliation of Jesus on the cross and the accompanying attitude of Christ, namely full subjection to the will of the Father and willingness to sacrifice his life in anticipation to be honoured and glorified by the Father.

In Mark 8–10, the disciples and the service of Jesus is closely connected with his suffering and death as a ransom for many. The willingness of Jesus to die in obedience to his Father is also expected of the disciples of Jesus.

Likewise, in John 12, the disciples’ διακονία is directly related to the death of a grain of wheat, which is described as the hour of the glorification of Jesus. The disciples must be willing to lose their lives in order to regain it.

Ephesians 4 treats the result of the suffering and death of Jesus on the grounds of which predestination, rebirth and sealing by the Spirit took place. In this context, the
concept ‘in Christ’ is repeatedly used. Because of his descent to earth, Jesus can hand out gifts with his ascension to make the διακονία possible. Because believers have come to know Jesus, they must now leave the old human being behind, their spirit and thoughts must become renewed and they have to clothe themselves with the new human being.

The concept of a διάκονος in the mind of the writers mentioned above, can thus be someone who has grown in his preparedness to make sacrifice for the kingdom of God. He is someone who has put many wrong practices behind him and who will confess his sins and turn away from any wrongdoing when he realises that it is still part of his life.

9.6.4.4 The word group is sometimes closely connected with care, hospitality, compassion and love

| Mark 8:1–10 | John 12:1–13:17 | Ephesians 4:1–16 | 1 Peter 4:8–11 |

In Chapter 6 (p. 124), it has been shown that Mark places the relevant section in the inclusio of 8:1–9 and 10:46–52. Mark 8:1–9 has a description of the compassion (σπλαγχνίζομαι) of Jesus for a hungry crowd; in 10:46–52, an individual pleading for the mercy (ἐλεέω) of Jesus is described. The crowd tries to silence the man, but without success. It has been shown that Mark strengthens the theme of compassion and mercy in 8:10–10:45 by the three-fold announcement of Jesus that He is going to suffer and die. Every time, the announcement is followed by his deeds of openness towards people from different layers of society and the mercy He shows them. Together with the actions of Jesus, the disciples’ lack of understanding and their inability to adopt the attitude of openness and compassion of Jesus are singled out. After the last announcement of his suffering and the disciples’ aspiration for honour, Jesus describes the purpose of his coming to the earth and the attitude with which the disciples should act. In this description, He uses the διάκονος- word group.

The semantic content assigned here to the διακονία of Jesus and the disciples has to take into account the focus on compassion and mercy.

It has been shown that John 13 is a more detailed description of what Jesus describes in John 12:24 as the death of the grain of wheat. In John 13, the emphasis
is on the love of Jesus for those whom the Father has given Him and on the love that should be among the disciples. People should be able to identify them as followers of Jesus because of their mutual love for each other. It has also been shown that there is a close connection between the διακονία described in 12:26 and the conversation of Jesus with Peter and John in 21:15–17. With his questions, Jesus emphasises love as a condition for Peter’s service. Already in 12:43, not following Jesus is connected with love for honouring the human being above the love for Jesus.

As has been said above and elsewhere, Ephesians 4 is connected with the previous chapter by the word οὖν in verse 1. Ephesians 3 is a description of Paul’s διακονία, from which the church among the readers has originated. The task of the church is that they will demonstrate the wisdom of God to the different active powers. Paul therefore prays that the believers will experience the entire scope of Christ’s love. He ends his prayer declaring that the glory must go to God, who can do far above what we can pray or think. For this reason (4:1 – οὖν), the readers are called upon to a conduct of life worthy of their calling. In 4:2–6, the way in which they must live up to this calling is described. In verse 2 (NIV), Paul guides them saying, ‘be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.’ The words used to describe openness towards others (ταπεινοφροσύνης, πρᾳότητος, μακροθυμίας); exhort the readers to, notwithstanding the actions of others, bear with each other in love (ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ). In verses 15 and 16, the theme of love is addressed again. From the use of the present participle in verse 15, it can be concluded that verse 15 is a description of the way in which the growth referred to in verse 11–14 takes place, namely that the truth must be shared with each other in love. In verse 16, the edification of the congregation takes place by everyone’s contribution in the context of love. The conduct of life of congregants must be worthy of their calling. In this respect, love plays an important role and it can be accepted the believers’ διακονία, with which they are equipped, is also characterised by love and openness towards each other.

As in Ephesians 4, the instruction to perform service (διακονία) is also preceded by the command of love and mutual acceptance (openness) in 1 Peter 4. In 1 Peter 5, Christ’s attitude of compassion and mercy, as He taught it to his disciples according
to the gospels, is applied to the attitude with which the elders should perform their
service and to the way in which the congregants should act towards each other.

From the above-mentioned discussion, it can be concluded that the διάκονος word
group in the gospels and in Ephesians and 1 Peter is used in coherence with an
attitude of compassion, openness and love.

The concept of a διάκονος in the mind of the writers mentioned above, can thus
be someone who has compassion with and openness and love for even the most
unimportant person, and can lead the congregation towards the same attitude.

9.6.4.5 The word group is often used in coherence with the victory of Jesus
over the evil

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In Mark 10:45, the service of Jesus is directly related to a ransom. This ransom
refers to the deliverance from slavery. In Mark 16, the result of paying the ransom is
described. Jesus promises his disciples saying:

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive
out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their
hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will
place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.

From these words of Jesus, it can be concluded that Mark describes the διακονία of
Jesus as a victory over sickness, death and the evil.

In John 12:31, the death of Jesus (as a grain of wheat) is connected with the
judgment and fall of the evil, but at the same time, the διακονία of those that follow
Him is also connected with the fall of evil. Their διακονία is made part of the hour of
the exaltation of Jesus. This hour is closely connected with the crucifixion of Jesus in
verse 31, 32 and consequently, with casting out the evil.

Ephesians 4:8 depicts Jesus as the victorious king, who takes captives with Him in
his triumphal procession and hands out gifts. The gifts therefore come from the
conqueror-king Jesus Christ and those that receive them use them to cripple the sly
plans of the evil so that so that there can be growth in the body of Christ.
Lincoln (1990) interprets the events saying the following:

Since it is the triumphant ascent and the gifts which particularly interest the writer as parallels, he does not develop explicitly the concept of leading captive a host of prisoners. However, such a concept certainly fits the earlier depiction of Christ’s exaltation over the powers in 1:21, 22, which these words from the psalm may well have conjured up again (cf. also Col. 2:15). (p. 242)

O’Brien (1999) has the following comments:

The goal of Christ’s exaltation to the place of highest supremacy is ‘that he might fill all things’. This final clause corresponds to 1:23, ‘the fullness of him who fills everything in every way,’ where the verb ‘fill’ signifies to ‘control by exercise of sovereignty’. Christ fills the universe, not in some semi-physical sense, but by his mighty rule over all things (see on 1:22–23), a notion that is paralleled in the Old Testament where filling the universe, in this sense of exercising sovereign rule, is predicated of God: ‘“Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the L ORD’ (Jer. 23:24). Here the idea is transferred to Christ: he fills the universe through the exercise of his lordship over everything. This entails his functioning as the powerful ruler over the principalities (1:21), and giving grace and strength to his people (4:13, 15–16), through whom he fulfils his purposes. Christ now sets out to accomplish the goal of filling all things by supplying his people with everything necessary to foster the growth and perfection of the body (v. 13). Having achieved dominion over all the powers through his victorious ascent, he sovereignly distributes gifts to the members of his body. The building of the body is inextricably linked with his intention of filling the universe with his rule, since the church is his instrument in carrying out his purposes for the cosmos. (p. 296–297)

In 1 Peter 5:8, believers are called upon to resist the devil and persevere despite their suffering; eventually, God will make them steadfast. The instruction to the believers as managers of the grace of God to serve each other with their gifts is placed in the context of the end times with a strong emphasis on the coming judgment of the wicked. In Chapter 6 (see p. 124), it has been shown that the service of the believers is described in 1 Peter 4 and 5. In addition, the διάκονια is closely connected with conquering the evil.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the confession of Jesus as Lord is directly connected with the work of the Spirit, who distributes gifts according to his own will for the διάκονια of
the believers. The confession is also connected with the powerful work of God through the διακονία of those that confess Jesus as Lord. This confession is contrasted with the service to mute idols. Thiselton (2000:916) says about the previous lifestyle of the Corinthians that there is a contrast between the ‘spirituality’ of the πνευματικοί, which emphasises knowledge, wisdom and ‘exalted states of consciousness’ and the confession of the cross as salvation events. The confession of Jesus as Lord serves as condition for true spirituality. The gifts of grace come from the Lord that conquered the evil.

Vincent (1887:255) singles out another contrast saying, ‘The contrast is implied with the living vocal spirit, which dwells and works in Christ’s people, and responds to their prayers.’

The concept of a διάκονος in the mind of the writers mentioned above can thus be someone in whose life the victory of Christ is realised visibly and who can lead the congregation to also begin to live up to this victory.

9.6.4.6 Διακονία is closely connected to grace, the gifts and the powerful work of God.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the work of the Triune God with regard to the gifts (χαρισμάτων), service (διακονιῶν) and the effectiveness of the service (ἐνεργημάτων) that is taking place under the guidance of the Spirit is described. Paul uses the word χαρισμάτων in contrast to the word πνευματικός, which is used by the Corinthians. In this way, he emphasises the origin of the gifts, namely the grace of God. Thiselton (2000) explains the usage of the words:

Paul’s change of the Corinthian term πνευματικά, spiritual things, to χαρίσματα, spiritual gifts, “gifts of grace,” calls attention to God’s generous act of freely apportioning different gifts to different recipients. Once again, grace through the cross governs ecclesiology and ministry. (p. 929–930)

Verse 7 of Ephesians 4 states that grace (χάρις) is given to everyone and that Christ decides which gift is measured out to each one (Eph. 4:7: Ενὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ
ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Christ is further described as the one that descended and ascended again. The purpose of his coming and going was that He would fill or complete everything (Eph. 4:10: ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα). In close connection with this purpose, the equipping gifts are described in verse 11; the purpose of the equipment they provide is that the believers will perform their service (εἰς ἔργον διακονίας). As has been mentioned before, Ephesians 4 has to be read in the light of 3:20 and 21. There it is said that the glory in the church is due to Him ‘who is able (δυναμένω) to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν).’

In addition, here in Ephesians, grace, διακονία and the powerful work of God are closely connected.

1 Peter 4:1–5:11 discusses the actions of believers towards each other in the midst of persecution and attacks by the devil. In verse 10, the believers as managers of the multi-coloured grace of God is are instructed to serve each other with their gifts of grace. Verse 11 mentions two categories of gifts or two ways in which the gifts can be managed: those that concern the proclamation of the Word and those that concern practical service work. This division reflects the calling of Jesus to speak only the words and do the deeds of his Father. It also reflects the two-fold division of the διακονία in Acts 6, namely the διακονία of the Word and prayers and the διακονία of the tables. In 1 Peter 4:11, it is said that the διακονία has to be done with the strength that God provides (εἴ τις διακονεῖ, ὡς ἐξ ἰσχύος ἢς χορηγεῖ ὁ Θεός). It has been shown that 1 Peter 5 continues to describe the διακονία of the elders and the congregation. In 1 Peter 5:6, the apostle instructs the congregation saying, ‘Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God (τὴν κραταίαν χεῖρα τοῦ Θεοῦ), that He may exalt you in due time.’ In verse 11, he concludes saying, ‘To Him be the dominion (τὸ κράτος) for ever and ever. Amen.’ The congregation must do their διακονία knowing the might of God, subjecting them to his might and recognising that He reigns through his might.

MacArthur (2004) interprets Peter’s description of the might of God as follows:
The mighty hand of God is descriptive of God’s sovereign power at work in and through the elders of the church, as well as in the life experience of His people (cf. Isa. 48:13; Ezek. 20:33–34; Zeph. 1:4; 2:13; Luke 1:49–51). Whether for deliverance (Ex. 3:19–20; 13:3–16), for testing (Job 30:20–21), or for chastening (Ezek. 20:33–38), God’s might is always accomplishing His eternal purposes on behalf of His own (cf. Pss. 57:2; 138:8; Is. 14:24–27; 46:10; 55:11; Jer. 51:12; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:28; 9:11, 17; Eph. 3:11; Phil. 2:13). (p. 278–279)

The concept of a διάκονος in the mind of the writers mentioned above can thus be someone who uses the gifts of the Spirit to do his διακονία so that God’s effective work can take place.

9.7 Διακόνοι as leaders

From Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3, the conclusion is that there were leaders in the congregation that were designated by the word διάκονος. The particular leaders were called such, because their gifts and work had specific characteristics. The believers regarded the word διάκονος as appropriate for these gifts and work. In the previous section of the chapter, certain semantic possibilities in which the διάκονος word group is used have been analysed in the context of specific sections. The possible content of the service of the leaders and the nature of their work as these aspects have come to the fore in each section have also been indicated. In the next section, the semantic possibilities have been compared to each other in the context of the different scriptural sections and it has been shown that certain themes (corresponding uses/concepts) could be identified. In this way, a certain semantic potential of the διάκονος word group that could be a co-determinant in the decision why those leaders were designated διάκονος has been identified. Everyone in the congregation can be called a διάκονος of Christ, but some διακόνοι take the lead in the διακονία. He or she is not called a ἀπόστολος or πρεσβύτερος, because the area of ministry in which he or she is taking the lead in the congregation is the διακονία; therefore, he or she is designated by the word διάκονος. What has been said above about the essence and content of the διακονία of the διάκονος, is pre-eminently true of the διακονία of the διάκονος that takes the lead in the congregation.
In the Scriptural sections that have been investigated in the previous chapters, the διάκονος word group is sometimes used to describe leaders. Nowhere in those Scriptural sections, is the word διάκονος used as the technical term to refer to a certain type of leader in the congregation (as in 1 Tim. and Phil. 1). It has indeed been shown that Jesus is teaching his disciples in Mark 8–10 to act as leaders and that the διάκονος word group describes a certain attitude in his teachings. This attitude is that those that want to be great (leaders) have to be the διάκονος of all, and the one that wants to be first (leader) has to be the slave of all. The leaders have to lead the congregation in willingness to serve. They have to be like Jesus, who is their Lord and teacher (leader), but who has not come to be served but to serve. The same attitude is described in 1 Peter 5 in respect of the elders and the whole congregation. It is an attitude of willingness to serve to each other and subjection to God in anticipation that God will exalt you at the right time. The elders have to be examples to the congregation in this regard.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the gifts that some leaders have received to be apostles, prophets and preachers are mentioned as part of the variety of gifts, but as a result of the description, ‘first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers,’ the gifts of these leaders place them in a special position among the leaders. However, the entire chapter indicates that all gifts are equal, and that the one cannot do without the other and that none can be missed. In Ephesians 4:11, persons are mentioned that have received the gifts to be apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers with the task of equipping the congregation for their service. They are also compared to the joints in the body (Eph. 4:16) that have to enable the members to fulfil their functions so that each member can work powerfully in building up the body.

On of the main characteristics of a διάκονος that is a leader, is that he does not have a hierarchical position above the other members, but that he must take the lead in willingness to serve and following Christ. The leader is also called to equip the believers for their service.

The *essence* and *content* of the διάκονος that acts as leader, can be summarised as follows: the διακόνοι that are leaders must demonstrate the character and conduct of life described in 1 Timothy 3; he or she must be an example for the
congregation how to be a true διάκονος; and they have to equip the congregation for service together with the pastors and ministers.

9.8 The task of the deacon today on the grounds of the possible tasks of the leader-διάκονος in the context of the Reformed Churches in South Africa

According to the two-fold division that Christ made in his work on earth, namely between the words of the Father and the deeds of the Father, the διακονία of the congregation can also be divided into two parts. It can never be an absolute division or separation, because eventually it concerns the same διακονία of Christ, which is just expressed in different ways. The two areas in which the διακονία is expressed, is also used in Acts 6 to distinguish the work area of the apostles from that of the seven. Also in 1 Peter 4:11, the distinction is made between the various gifts, namely between the gifts of serving and the gifts of speaking. Of course, this division cannot be regarded as prescriptive for the church, but it can be followed as a practical arrangement to divide the leadership with regard to the διακονία in the congregation between elders and deacons, as described in Acts 6.

The deacon and the elder assume leadership in the congregation to lead and equip members for their διακονία. The elders (together with the minister that is also an elder) focus on the ministry of the Word and overseeing the congregation in their work. The work of the deacons is to take the lead in the practical (deed) διακονία. It comprises that the congregation is guided to understand the grace of the Triune God and embrace it. They must understand that the grace they receive spells out their calling. They have to hand out this grace through their διακονία, which has been made possible by the gifts they receive. To be able to do that, they must commit themselves completely to the service of God, even to death, in the glorious anticipation that God will honour and glorify them. The deacons must guide and equip the congregation for this service. They have to guide the congregation to speak the truth to each other in love, and as good managers of the grace of God, they must serve each other according to the gift of grace each one has received. Through this mutual ministry, growth to Christ has to take place in the congregation.
so that no one will be seduced by the sly attack of the Satan. In this way, they will attain the unity that God planned in Christ in his eternal plan. They will also demonstrate the greatness of the grace and wisdom of God to people and powers. When the congregation use their gifts to do their διακονία, God works powerfully, and through his Spirit He creates everything in everybody according to his will. In this way, the victory of Jesus over the evil is celebrated and is his might at work. Thus, other people come to know God because of the διακονία of the congregation and they come together under the headship of Christ.

The work of the deacons is therefore to activate the congregation to serve each other with the grace of God, which He gives to each one when he or she uses his or her gifts. By doing this, the deacons and congregation follow Christ, who did not come to be served, but to serve. They also become servants in the world where they live (walk) and by serving others make God’s grace known and God who gives new life and faith will add people to the congregation.
Chapter 10

Vision for a ministry plan of a local Reformed congregation

Synopsis

The central theoretical argument has been stated in Chapter 1 as follows: The results gleaned from the study of the διάκονος word group in the New Testament make valuable and central contributions in compiling a Biblically based ministry plan for a local Reformed congregation.

In Chapter 9, the results of the study have been summarised and applied to the task of the deacons. The summary will serve as a basis for a Biblical ministry plan of a local congregation in the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

This chapter will summarise the results of the study that a local congregation in the RCSA should take into account when formulating a ministry plan. In this way, a vision for a ministry plan for a local Reformed congregation is proposed.

10.1 A vision for a ministry plan

In Chapter 1 (p. 1), the central theoretical argument has been stated as follows: The results gleaned from the study of the διάκονος word group in the New Testament make valuable and central contributions in compiling a Biblically based ministry plan for a local Reformed congregation. The confessions of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) declare that they hold the Bible as the Word of God (Belgic Confession, art. 3–5). A ministry plan for a local Reformed congregation should be based on thorough exegesis of the Word of God. One aspect of the ministry of a congregation, namely the διακονία, has been studied and the results of the study will now be used to formulate a vision for a ministry plan in a Reformed congregation. In Chapter 9 (p. 211), the results of the study have been summarised and applied to the task of the deacons. The summary will serve as a basis for a Biblical ministry plan. Some facts will be repeated for the sake of the clarity of the argument.
10.2 God’s ministry

Ephesians describes God’s eternal plan for all things (cf. Chapter 2, p. 17). God is executing this plan by what the Father has done and is doing through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. He also uses people to execute his plan, people like children, beggars, the apostles, the prophets, the elders, evangelists, teachers and every believer (cf. Chapters 2–9). In the final analysis, however, the execution of the plan is in his hands (Chapter 2, p. 17). In Ephesians, Paul demonstrates dependence on God by his consistent prayer to God to strengthen the believers in their knowledge of his grace and love for them (cf. Eph. 1, 3). He also urges the believers to depend on God and his strength to be able to stand up in the war against the evil spirits and sin (Eph. 5, 6; Chapter 2, p. 17). Jesus showed the same dependence in his διακονία (cf. Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 4, p. 73; Chapter 6, p. 124).

A congregation that hold the Bible to be the Word of God should build their ministry plan on the work of God. God the Father elected people and adopted them as his children (Eph. 1). By his mercy, which flows from his love, He raises them from their spiritual death and makes them alive. In Christ, He creates them for the good works that He has planned for them. He makes them part of his covenant and promises and makes them one in Christ (Eph. 2). His Holy Spirit lives in them and builds them up as a holy temple where He lives (Eph. 2; cf. Chapter 4, p. 73). Jesus Christ gave his life as ransom (Mark 10:45) so that they may receive redemption through his blood, forgiveness of their trespasses and victory over evil powers and sin (Eph. 4–6). Because they know Christ through faith, they are renewed in their hearts and minds and can grow to become more and more like Him (Eph.4:21–24; Chapter 2, p. 17).

In Ephesians, the Holy Spirit is presented as the one who works in the believers to be regenerated, to believe and to continue to grow towards Jesus Christ. He works the unity in the congregation and is grieved when the unity is endangered by the wrong conduct of believers. To walk in the way of God, believers must be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 4 and 5; Chapter 2, p. 17). In 1 Corinthians 12, the Holy Spirit is presented as the one who gives gifts according to his will and places people in the congregation. The congregation are the body of Christ with and through whom He
continues his work. He enables the church to do their διακονία (cf. Chapter 5, p. 91).

Dependence on God must be part of the design of a ministry plan. Prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit is essential. It is necessary to be aware of the fact that the ministry plan is a plan for God’s ministry. However, it takes place through people in the body of Christ as the temple that is being prepared by the Holy Spirit for God.

This knowledge prevents the congregation from getting despondent when the success of the ministry is not achieved in the way they have envisaged. This also stands in contrast with a ministry where some people act as if they own the ministry and speak about ‘my ministry’ or ‘my church’. A whole ministry cannot be built around one charismatic personality. It is always God’s διακονία, which is done by his διακόνοι in the attitude of Christ.

### 10.3 On the foundation of the apostles

According to Ephesians, the work of the apostles was fundamental to the ministry of the church. Paul’s διακονία (and that of the other apostles) is the instrument through which God established the foundation for the execution of his plan through the church. The gospel, which is recorded in the books of the Bible, should be studied and used as the starting-point for all ministries in the church (Chapter 2, p. 17). In-depth teaching of the Word of God following on thorough exegesis has to govern everything that is done in ministry (Chapter 2, p. 17; Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 4, p. 73).

### 10.4 Being a representative of Christ

In all the passages that have been investigated, the church as a whole and the individual members constituting the church has been presented as representatives of Jesus Christ, also through their διακονία. As the Son of Man, Jesus revealed God. According to the Gospels, He said that he only spoke the words of his Father and only did the deeds of his Father. According to the Gospels, Jesus told his disciples to follow Him in his attitude and in his words and deeds (Mark 10:42–45; John 12:26, 13:15). Each of his followers should reveal God through their διακονία. He would send his Spirit to remind his disciples of his words, and he promised them that they
would also do great deeds. As the Father had sent Him, He sent his disciples to teach others (John 20:21; Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 4, p. 73).

Paul says that through his διακονία the church under the Gentiles came into being (Eph. 3; Chapter 2, p. 17). The task of the church is to show the grace and wisdom of God in Christ Jesus. The church is called the body of Christ in Ephesians and 1 Corinthians 12; it embodies his fullness and has to grow to maturity to display his image (Chapter 2, p. 17; Chapter 5, p. 91).

Peter calls on his readers to follow Christ in their suffering. Under the greatest provocation they should still live with the attitude of Christ, who continued to do good and trusted his Father to exalt Him. As stewards of God’s manifold grace, they had to serve each other with their gifts by being humble and hospitable and by loving each other. The leaders and every member had to follow Jesus in his attitude of humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, and they had to wait on Him to exalt them in due time (Chapter 6, p. 124).

A congregation that hold Scripture as the revelation of God should therefore take into account that they are representatives of Christ when putting a ministry plan together. As a congregation and as individual members they should know their identity as representatives of Jesus Christ. In their teaching and in their structure, this truth should be a priority. Children should be led to enter the covenantal space, to confess Jesus as their Lord, to accept his grace and to know their identity in Him as his representatives. A congregation that want to live up to the covenantal relationship as it is sealed in baptism have to incorporate a ministry that promotes healthy families. Families must actively be guided in areas like parental harmony, effective communication, wise parental control and parental nurturing (Eph. 4–6; Chapter 2, p. 17).

These principles are clearly opposed to a ministry that is based on a social gospel, a prosperity gospel or a feel-good gospel, where the focus is on the well-being of people in the first place and not on representing God (Chapter 5, p. 91).

10.5 Being a diaconal church

Being a representative of Christ means, you exist to serve and not to be served. In Mark (also in Mathew and Luke; cf. Chapter 6, p. 124). Jesus says his objective for
coming to earth is to serve. If anyone (also the church as body) wants to serve Jesus, they must follow Him in this objective. The church should therefore be a serving community, serving each other and serving every person they meet. They are the workmanship of God, created in Christ for the good works God has prepared for them (Eph. 2:10). Through the διακονία of the church, God will effectively work all things in all (1 Cor. 12:6), gathering people to the congregation as they receive God’s grace through the διακονία of the church. The διακονία of the saints is the final outlet of God’s grace to the body of Christ and to the world. See Chapter 2 (p. 17) - Chapter 5 (p. 91).

In Chapter 6 (p. 124), it has been argued that Mark links διακονία closely to love and compassion. According to Mark, Jesus taught his disciples to be open and convivial even to the least deserving people (Chapter 6). As regards John, it is argued that John 12, 13 and 21 are thematically and semantically connected and that the connection links διακονία closely to the love of Christ for his disciples and the disciples’ (especially Peter’s) love for Jesus (Chapter 4, p. 73). In Ephesians, the διακονία of the congregation goes hand in hand with an attitude of ‘lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love’ (4:2), and with communication that gives grace to the hearer and builds others up, being ‘kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you’ (4:32). Peter connects the use of the gifts of the congregation to the fervent love for each other, ‘using hospitality one to another without murmuring’ (1 Pet. 4:9; cf. Chapter 2, p. 17; Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 6, p. 124; and Chapter 7, p. 145).

The ministry plan of a local congregation should enhance the discovery of the gifts of every member and lead them to use their gifts to serve each other and every person they meet without expecting to be served. An attitude of love, hospitality and forgiveness should be nurtured in the congregation. The congregation should be a place where God’s grace is served to each other and people outside the congregation. The ministry must not only be aimed at getting people to do certain things but to help them to become more and more the new person they are in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is the core of a diaconal church. It contrasts with a ministry where the members only attend the meetings of the church and the elders, ministers anddeacons serve
them. It is the opposite of a ministry that focuses only on the well-being of the members without reaching out to the community, friends, colleagues and others. The new life of the members does not mean adhering to certain laws or prescriptions, but it is a new way of thinking, which flows into a new attitude and a new way of living by following and walking with God in love (Eph. 4, 5; Chapter 2, p. 17).

10.6 Equipping the believers for their διακονία

Equipping the believers for their διακονία serves as a bridge between the indicative of God’s work, which flows from his mercy, and a life based on the knowledge of Christ.

A ministry plan should facilitate the congregation’s growth in knowledge of the grace of God as explained in Ephesians 1–3 and other books of the Bible (cf. Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 6, p. 124). The congregation should be clear about their identity and calling to be a witness to the greatness of his grace and his wisdom. Every demand made on the congregation should build on the knowledge of the indicative of God’s grace.

Equipping the saints should focus on activating each member’s unique gifts and the use of opportunities (cf. Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 5, p. 91). Each member of the congregation is placed in that body with a specific purpose and that purpose should be discovered and pursued together with every member (1 Cor. 12). This would mean a very individualised and work intensive ministry, in which every member that has already grown to maturity should be involved in equipping and caring for others.

The purpose of equipping the saints is also to help them to live as representatives of God (cf. Chapter 2, p. 17; Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 4, p. 73; Chapter 7, p. 145; Chapter 9, p. 211). They should know their calling to make God visible through their διακονία (Chapter 3, p. 53). Only those regenerated by the Holy Spirit can meet God in his Word and see God’s work in the things of daily live. An important focus in the ministry should be to lead every member (also children) with great patience (cf. Chapter 6, p. 124) to confess Jesus as Lord (cf. Chapter 5, p. 91). To confess Jesus as Lord means to follow him in being obedient to the Father, even to death, doing the Father’s deeds and speaking his words (cf. Chapter 4, p. 73). Equipping the members to use their gifts for their service (διακονία) is always done in the
expectation that God’s power will work all things in all (cf. Chapter 5, p. 91). By this powerful work of God, the body of Christ is built up to stability and maturity (cf. Chapter 2, p. 17). The congregation should structure the ministry plan in such a way that opportunities are created for members to serve each other (Chapter 5, p. 91) and that they will be equipped to use other opportunities that God can create, to the full.

Children should also be guided to do service work (διακονία) so that they can discover their gifts and the place they want to serve in this way. Practical training for all members in a certain field of the διακονία is a necessity. Equipping is a process not a happening. The child should work with adults (his family) to see, experience and be equipped in the same way Jesus did with his disciples (Chapter 5, p. 91). As members mature, the ministry plan should put members of the congregation to work to help and equip other members. The vision of everyone working and contributing with the gift they have received should be an integral part of the ministry plan.

This vision contrasts with a ministry where the congregation are only told what they have to do. They are not informed and shown how they should do it; they are therefore not practically equipped for their διακονία. Equipping courses for the members of the congregation should be part of the ministry plan.

10.7 Working towards the body of Christ as a space where members can speak the truth in love to each other as part of their διακονία

From the exegesis of Ephesians 4 (Chapter 2, p. 17), it has become clear that the growth of the body is closely linked to the truth and to knowledge of God’s plan of grace. Being equipped with the truth, the members will be able to withstand the onslaught of people with sly plans to take them away from the truth. The congregation that is growing towards maturity will learn more and more to speak the truth in love to each other as part of their διακονία (4:15). Ephesians 4:29 (see below) could be considered as a further explanation of what is meant in 4:15. The whole of Ephesians 4 is enclosed by Paul’s call for them to live with each other in peace under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see Table 6: Paul’s call in Ephesians 4:1 and 4:29–32, p. 253).
Table 6: Paul’s call in Ephesians 4:1 and 4:29–32

| 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all humility and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. | 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed from your mouth, but only what is good for edification, that it may give grace to them that hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and blasphemy be removed from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as also God in Christ forgave us. |

Lincoln (1990) says the following about truth and love in Ephesians 4:15:

A conceptual link with the notion of growth is to be found here in any case, since the whole clause, “speaking the truth in love,” should be understood as the means of the Church’s growth. The association of truth and love in this clause is a significant one. Any claim to loyalty to truth which results in lack of love to those perceived to be disloyal stands as much condemned as any claim to all-embracing love which is indifferent to truth. But it is not as if two competing claims or two quite different qualities have to be held in balance. Ultimately, at the heart of the proclamation of the truth is love, and a life of love is the embodiment of the truth. The Church reflects this relationship when its witness to the truth has love as its style and as its power. (p. 260)

Part of the growth process in a congregation comprises that it becomes a place where sins can be confessed, forgiveness can be received and instruction in the truth can be given. The congregation should, via their ministry plan, work towards becoming a save place for sinners to come into the light and receive healing by the truth that is spoken to them in love. Part of the ministry should also be that unrepentant sinners could be reprimanded with the truth in love. This can only happen if the attitude described in 4:1–3 and 4:29–32 is an ever-growing entity in the
congregation. In this way, the unity of the Spirit is preserved (4:3) and the Spirit is not grieved (4:30; Chapter 2, p. 17). Practical measures such as small groups, courses for addicts and marriage accountability groups can be part of the ministry plan that adheres to this view on ministry.

Speaking the truth in love is in contrast with a ministry where condemnation of the fallen member is the accepted attitude, which promotes the pretence of everyone that everything is fine in his or her life. People hide their sins, struggles and hurt. Speaking truth in love is also contrary to the practice of disciplining members without first calling them to the love and grace of God.

10.8 Apportioning the leadership for effective service

Every member should be cared for and every member should be equipped for and have the opportunity to do his or her διακονία (cf. Chapter 5, p. 91; Chapter 8, p. 186). Members should be activated to use their gifts for their διακονία in and outside the congregation. In that way, they will grow to maturity towards Christ (cf. Chapter 2, p. 17). Jesus in his ministry cared for the most important people as well as for the outcasts of society. He taught his disciples openness to children, the demon-possessed, beggars, prostitutes and other people acting in Jesus’ name (cf. Chapter 6, p. 124). Paul taught the congregation to take special care of the seemingly most unimportant people (like children) and that they are indispensable in the body of Christ (cf. Chapter 5, p. 91).

To fulfil this task, the leadership should be apportioned so that more people would become involved in ministry, but each one should do only as much as they can handle effectively (according to time and capacity). Each of the leaders should focus on his or her primary task and appoint other leaders to do things that will distract them from their primary task (cf. Chapter 8, p. 186). Thus, the διακονία to the congregation would not be compromised in any way (cf. Chapter 8, p. 186).

In the ministry plan of a congregation, the tasks of the minister, elder and deacon should be clearly demarcated. Each one should focus on his or her primary task and as soon as the task becomes too big to handle effectively, it should be divided among other leaders or the members of the congregation. Under guidance and overseeing of the leaders, as many members as possible should do the work. God
prepared good works for the members, who are his handiwork and whom He created for good works (Eph. 2:10). When the members are entrusted with some responsibility, their διακονία will grow as God reveals to them what He wants them to do (chapters 2–9).

This ministry plan is in contrast with a hierarchical ministry or a ministry where a few (paid) persons have to do all the work.

10.9 Appointing elders to be shepherds and overseers with Jesus’ attitude

From the exegesis of 1 Peter 4 and 5, it has become clear that the elders have a special διακονία in the congregation, namely overseeing and caring for the flock. Peter makes it clear to the elders that they should have the attitude of Christ not seeking their own benefit but serving willingly and eagerly, not wanting to be rulers but being an example of the attitude of Christ. They must lead the congregation to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, expecting to be exalted in due time (1 Pet. 5:1–6; Chapter 6, p. 124). In a ministry plan, the growth of the members in their faith and dedication to Christ, from the youngest to the oldest, should be sought after fervently. When leaders have the attitude of Christ and they become elders in the congregation, they serve as examples to the congregation. Thus, following their example, the whole congregation will grow in the attitude of Christ (cf. also Chapter 2, p. 17; Chapter 7, p. 145). Equipping the equippers (elders) should be a practical part of the ministry plan of the congregation. The purpose of the equipment should always also be the growth of the elders’ trust in God to exalt them so that they can, based on this certainty, serve in humbleness and lead the congregation through the same process and to the same end.

This is in contrast with choosing leaders in the congregation because of their status in community or even their natural skills. The aim of a ministry plan should be the progressive equipment of the members by involving them in the ministry on an ongoing basis. Before somebody becomes an elder, he should have shown the characteristics and gifts necessary for an elder in his ongoing ministry over time. The congregation should know him for being led by the Spirit of God and then choose him to be an elder (cf. Chapter 7, p. 145).


10.10 Giving deacons leadership in activating the members’ gifts for διακονία

In chapters 8 and 9, it has been shown that confusion exists about the essence and content of the deacon’s work. There are no clear prescriptions in the New Testament as to what the essence and content of the deacon’s work should be.

From the study results of the διάκονος word group, a proposal has been made about the possible essence and content of the work of the deacon (cf. Chapter 9, p. 211). The leadership in the congregation can be divided according to the two parts of the ministry of Jesus, who spoke the words of the Father and did the deeds of the Father. The same two parts were used in the first church (Acts 6) when the apostles chose the διακονία of the Word and prayers and the seven received the διακονία of the tables. In 1 Peter 4:10–11, the author seems to refer to the same two parts when he says, ‘If anyone speaks, let him speak as the utterances of God. If anyone serves, let him serve as from strength, as God supplies…’

If the proposal in chapter 8 is accepted, a congregation should determine the whole spectrum of the διακονία that God wants them to do in the congregation and in the community. The διακονία should take place under the leadership of people that can live as examples and are able to equip and organise the congregation. From the study of Acts 6 (Chapter 8, p. 186), it has become clear that it is necessary for the leaders to determine their task and specialise in that task, and not try to do and be everything to everybody.

It is therefore important that the ministry plan should spell out what the tasks of the elders and the ministers are according to the Bible (cf. Chapter 7, p. 145; Chapter 8, p. 186). The rest of the διακονία should fall under the leadership of the deacons. The deacons can lead the congregation in the practical διακονία, equipping the congregation to discover, use and develop their gifts. Within this part of the διακονία, the deacons should each choose his specialised area. Some can assume leadership in pastoral care of members, others in pastoral counselling, some in child and youth ministry, others in the prayer ministry, and so on. The task of the deacon is not to do the work on his own, but to lead the congregation to use their gifts to do the work of διακονία. The deacon then plays the activating, organising and
equipping role for a specific part of the διακονία of the congregation. In this way, the variety of gifts and διακονία, and their effective working, to which 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 refers, is actualised (cf. Chapter 5, p. 91).

This approach is in contrast with a ministry plan where the deacon does not really know what his task is or where he has a very limited task or is just an assistant to the elders or minister. In other contrasting approaches, the deacons (elders and minister) do all the work in the congregation. The members do not serve but demand to be served.

10.11 Losing people through the ministry

When the demand of Christ to follow Him comes to you, even if it asks of you to sacrifice things or people that are dear to you, not everyone will respond positively (Mark 9; John 12; cf. Chapter 4, p. 73; Chapter 6, p. 124). In a congregation where a ministry plan with the above stated vision is being implemented, some people might leave the congregation, not willing to serve but only wanting to be served. Many people left Jesus because he demanded this kind of διακονία from them. He told his disciples that they would also experience this reaction (cf. Chapter 3, p. 53; Chapter 4, p. 73; Chapter 6, p. 124).

10.12 A missional church

A major part of God’s eternal plan is to free people from the rule of evil to be renewed in Christ through the work of the Spirit. A congregation should always be missional in all of its ministry work and be open to various cultures to be included in the body of Christ.

A congregation should try to make certain during its missional ministry work that individuals have been regenerated before bringing the imperative of the new life to them. To ask them to live according to the Word of God before they have been regenerated is to ask something impossible of them. The indicative of God’s grace should always precede the imperative. When somebody is freed from the reign of the evil, there may be great guilt, shame and deep wounds. Coming into the body of Christ entails a total new way of thinking and doing, namely living from the knowledge of God’s love and grace in Christ. For that to happen, the person should
grow in his knowledge of God and be equipped to break with the old life-style and live as a new man or woman (Chapter 2, p. 17).

10.13 Conclusion
It has been shown in the research that the results gleaned from studies of the διάκον- word group in the New Testament make valuable and central contributions in compiling a Biblically based ministry plan for a local Reformed congregation.81

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81 The researcher of this study was involved with compiling a ministry plan that incorporated the greater part of the above-mentioned vision for a ministry plan. He has described the empirical study and the plan in two articles, namely ‘Op pad na ‘n volwasse gemeente’ ['On the way to a mature congregation'] (Breed & De Kock 2011) and ‘n Begronde bedieningsmodel vir die diakonia van die gemeente’ ['A grounded model of diakonia for the congregation'] (Breed 2012b).
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English summary

The central theoretical argument has been stated in Chapter 1 as follows: the results gleaned from the study of the διάκονος- word group in the New Testament make valuable and central contributions in compiling a Biblically based ministry plan for a local South African Reformed congregation.

The most recent research on the διάκονος- word group has shown that the semantic fields in which it is used are much wider than the traditional view that it expresses ‘humble and loving service’ and ‘serving as a waiter’. The study went out from the conviction that the semantic fields of this word group have to be determined in the light of the wider Scriptural context. The semantic fields in which the διάκονος- word group is used were determined by exegesis of the Scriptural sections in which it occurs. Through macro- and micro-analysis of the narratological structure, it has been shown that analysis of the context in which the διάκονος- word group is used is necessary to determine the semantic possibility of the word. The passages that have been identified to study are those that clearly deal with those aspects of ministry that can contribute to formulating a vision for a ministry plan. One passage from the synoptic gospels was chosen, namely Mark 10:45, because of the worldwide current discussion on the work of John N. Collins about the διάκονος- word group. From the unique Gospel of John, John 12 was chosen with a view to establish the semantic possibility of the word group as it is used in this chapter, as well as to determine the relation between διάκονος and discipleship. One more chapter was dedicated to John because of the important theme in John of the two-tiered narrative and the associated emphasis on the representative task of the followers of Jesus via their διακονία.

The book of Ephesians gives a description of the plan of God to bring all things together under Christ. The place of the διακονία of the church has been established in a chapter on Ephesians.

Three chapters investigate the διακονία of certain groups in the church. First, the place of children has been investigated with reference to 1 Corinthians 12. Subsequently, the διακονία of the elder and other groups in the congregation have
been investigated with reference to 1 Peter. In the last place, the διακονία of the deacon has been investigated in two chapters. Research has been done on Acts 6:1-6 to answer the question if it describes the institution of the service of deacon. In Chapter 9, the semantic possibilities of the διάκονος word group in the different contexts of the passages investigated have been compared to each other and it has been shown that certain themes (corresponding uses/concepts) can be identified. In this way, certain semantic potentials of the διάκονος word group that could be a co-determinant in the decision why certain leaders were named διάκονος have been identified. Proposals have been made for what the essence and content of the deacon’s work might be. The comparison of the semantic themes identified has given an insight into the διάκονος word group that can contribute to a vision for a ministry plan as described in Chapter 10. In this way, it has been shown that the results gleaned from the study of the διάκονος word group in the New Testament make valuable and central contributions in compiling a Biblically based ministry plan for a local Reformed congregation.

Some of the results are the following: The ministry of the congregation should be seen as God’s ministry built on the foundations of the apostles’ teaching. The ministry should be Christ-centred. The aim of the ministry should be to equip people to be representatives of Christ, to be diaconal in their way of life, doing their διακονία as part of their daily walk. Amongst each other, spaces should be created where members can speak the truth to each other in love. The leadership of the congregation should be apportioned to as many as necessary for effective service. Elders should be shepherds and overseers, while deacons should lead the congregation in activating their gifts for their διακονία inside and outside the church. The whole ministry should be focused on the growth of the congregation in the maturity of their faith towards becoming more and more like Christ. In this way, the church will also be a missional church bringing people together from various cultures and languages under Jesus Christ as the head of the body, the cornerstone of the temple where God lives through his Spirit.
Nederlandse samenvatting

Het centrale theoretische argument is in hoofdstuk 1 als volgt geformuleerd: de resultaten verkregen uit de studie van de διάκονος- woordgroep in het Nieuwe Testament leveren een waardevolle en centrale bijdrage bij het opstellen van een op de Schrift gebaseerde gemeentebedieningsplan (ministry plan) voor een lokale Zuid-Afrikaanse Gereformeerde gemeente.

Het meest recente onderzoek met betrekking tot de διάκονος- woordgroep toonde aan dat de semantische velden waarin deze woordgroep wordt gebruikt veel ruimer zijn dan de traditionele opvatting dat de betekenis ervan moet worden gezocht in 'nederige en liefdevolle dienst' en 'fungeren als ober'. De studie ging uit van de overtuiging dat de semantische velden van deze woordgroep dienen te worden bepaald in het licht van de bredere context van de Schrift. De semantische velden waarin de διάκονος- woordgroep wordt gebruikt, werden bepaald door exegese van de delen van de Schrift waarin deze woordgroep voorkomt. Door macro- en microanalyse van de narratologische structuur is aangetoond dat analyse van de context waarin de διάκονος- woordgroep wordt gebruikt, nodig is om de semantische mogelijkheden van het woord te kunnen bepalen. De passages die voor de studie zijn uitgekozen zijn die welke duidelijk betrekking hebben op aspecten van het bediening die kunnen bijdragen aan het formuleren van een visie op het ambt. Een passage uit een van de synoptische evangeliën (Marcus) werd gekozen vanwege de belangrijke plaats van Marcus 10:45 in de huidige wereldwijde discussie over het werk van John N. Collins over de διάκονος- woordgroep. Vanwege de uniciteit van het Johannes-evangelie werd Johannes 12 gekozen om de semantische mogelijkheid van de woordgroep te bepalen zoals die in Johannes 12 wordt gebruikt. Ook kon er een relatie worden gelegd tussen διάκονος en discipelschap. Aan Johannes werd nog een tweede hoofdstuk gewijd vanwege het thema van de tweesporige verhaalstructuur en de bijbehorende nadruk op de representatieve taak van de volgelingen van Jezus via hun διάκονια.

Het boek Efeziërs geeft een beschrijving van het plan van God om alle dingen onder Christus te verenigen. In het hoofdstuk over het boek Efeziërs wordt de plaats van de διάκονια van de kerk bepaald.
In drie hoofdstukken wordt de διακονία van bepaalde groepen in de kerk beschreven. Eerst werd de plaats van kinderen onderzocht op basis van 1 Korintiërs 12. Daarna werd de διακονία van de ouderling en andere groepen in de gemeente onderzocht op grond van 1 Petrus. Als allerlaatste werd de διακονία van de diaken onderzocht in twee hoofdstukken. Er werd onderzoek gedaan naar Handelingen 6:1-6 om de vraag te beantwoorden of daarin de instelling van het ambt van diaken wordt omschreven. In hoofdstuk 9 werden de semantische mogelijkheden van de δίάκονος woordgroep zoals die wordt gebruikt in de onderzochte passages contextueel met elkaar vergeleken en daarbij bleek dat bepaalde thema's (overeenkomende gebruiken/concepten) konden worden geïdentificeerd. Op deze manier zijn bepaalde semantische mogelijkheden van de δίάκονος woordgroep geïdentificeerd die mogelijk verklaren waarom bepaalde leiders als διάκονος werden benoemd, en is een eerste aanzet gemaakt voor een beschrijving van de essentie en inhoud van het werk van de diaken. Voortbouwend op de semantische thema's die zijn geïdentificeerd, wordt in hoofdstuk 10 beschreven hoe de inzichten uit de studie van de δίάκονος woordgroep hebben bijgedragen aan de ontwikkeling van een visie op een bedieningsplan. Op deze manier kon worden aangetoond dat de resultaten verkregen uit de studie van de δίάκονος woordgroep in het Nieuwe Testament waardevolle en centrale bijdragen leveren bij het opstellen van een op de Schrift gebaseerde bedieningsplan voor een lokale Zuid-Afrikaanse Gereformeerde gemeente.

De belangrijkste resultaten zijn de volgende. De gemeentebediening dient te worden gezien als Gods bediening die plaats vindt op basis van de leer van de apostelen. Deze functie dient gericht te zijn op Christus. Het doel van deze functie zou moeten zijn om mensen toe te rusten ten einde hen in staat te stellen op te treden als vertegenwoordigers van Christus, diaconaal te zijn in hun manier van leven, en hun διακονία te doen als deel hun dagelijks leven. Er moeten ruimten worden gecreëerd waar leden de waarheid kunnen spreken in liefde voor elkaar. Het leiderschap van de gemeente zou moeten worden verdeeld over zoveel mensen als nodig voor een effectieve dienstverlening, waarbij ouderlingen dienen te fungeren als herders en toezichthouders, en diakenen de gemeente moeten leiden in de activering van de gaven voor hun διακονία binnen en buiten de kerk. De gehele invulling moet zich
richten op de groei van de gemeente in de volwassenheid van hun geloof om steeds meer als Christus te worden. Op deze manier zal de kerk ook een missionaire kerk zijn die mensen uit verschillende culturen en talen samenvoegt in Jezus Christus als hoofd van het kerkelijk lichaam, als hoeksteen van de tempel waar God door zijn Geest leeft.