

On Church Leadership, Part 2: A Deacon's 'Job Description'

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to the first letter to Timothy, 1 Timothy. Chapter 3, if you're visiting with us and you need a Bible, the chair in front of you, you can pull that black Bible out and go to page 163, the back of that Bible.

Go to the back and you'll find page 163, 1 Timothy chapter 3. This morning we'll study verses 8 through 13.

Verses 8 through 13 this morning of chapter 3. And next week I'll do a Christmas message. You know, you've got to do those. Just being facetious.

Anyway, so I'm going to do a Christmas message. I thought about that, I've been thinking about that. I might, don't hold me to this, but I thought, maybe I'll do something from Hebrews.

Do something different, you know. Never heard a message on Hebrews on Christmas, have you? Neither have I, so I thought I'd do it. It might be fun. And I thought it was interesting too because the last Sunday of the year 2020, we're going to study 1 Timothy 3, 14 through 16, which is really the theme of the book, which I thought this is going to be perfect for not just the theme of the book for Timothy, but really the theme that we can have for 2021 as we come to New Year.

[1:32] It's amazing how those coincidences has happened, right? It's all coincidence, right? Providence, what's that? I'm being facetious again. Chapter 3, verses 8 through 13, let's read.

Wives likewise, let deacons be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households.

For those who have served well as deacons, obtain for themselves a good standing and great confidence in the faith, in faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

I never joined the military when I was young. Now I'm old. At least that's what Riley tells me all the time. I never joined the military. And in a way, I think it would have been good for me.

I think there's some bad points to that, especially now. There's just the lifestyle that's in the military and how those men live. It can be a huge influence in the wrong direction. But yet having said that, in the military, they teach you discipline, loyalty, order, authority.

[3:17] It's one lesson that young people really need to learn. And no matter what job you're given in the military, they all go through boot camp.

Same way. And everyone looks the same, although I've heard there's changes to that, but don't hold me to that. I just heard. But the idea is, everyone's going to look the same, they're going to be trained the same.

Whether you're a cook or a sniper, doesn't matter. Take the Navy SEALs, for example. One is going to have this job, one is going to have that job, this task, or that task.

But they all go through the same grueling, harsh discipline to be a Navy SEAL. All of them. It doesn't matter. The same with elders and pastors, overseers, and deacons.

Though deacons are merely servants, diakonos, that's where you get the word deacon, which means servant.

[4:28] They both go through the same type of qualifications. They're both called to be the same type of man. They're called to have the same type of character.

This first letter to Timothy is God's manual for church life. How does the church function?

How do you do this thing called church? That's what 1 Timothy's about. And we've been looking and going through that. He started with our goal, goal, which was love out of a pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith.

The means to the goal, which is the gospel. The gospel is everything. And then he talked about community prayer. How the church should be a church of prayer. Specifically the men. How the women should be learning in silence. That's what they're called to do. And then last week, he went into church leadership.

[5:38] Men who lead elders or overseers or pastors. It's all the same thing. Same guy. And then today, still on church leadership, on church leadership part two, a deacon's, and again, I use that on purpose, job description.

It's not really a job description because most of it is talking about his character. A deacon's job description.

Put it in a phrase for you. Deacons who are servants are also called to be men above reproach, to be men whose pursuit of godliness is seen by the way they live their lives.

They're servants of the gospel who live the gospel. There's some similarities, as you'll see in a moment, between overseers, bishops, elders, and deacons.

But there's also some differences. But both were called to be irreproachable. Both are called to have control over sin in their lives when it comes to drinking, when it came to money, when it came to their speech.

[6:53] Family also served as a good criterion. And if you want to, you can go back to, I think, October or early November, something like that.

I actually did a message on deacons holistically, looking at that in the New Testament. And you can go to that and listen to that because I don't want to spend too much time on that because we did that before.

I want to deal with the text here what we have before us in 1 Timothy 3, 8-13. But you see, between the overseers or elders or pastors and deacons, there's two major differences between them. First, no need to be skillful to teach. Second, nor are they called to manage God's church. This is vital to understand because in churches today, deacons are either those in charge, you have authority, or they don't know anything.

There's some guy, hey, you want to be a deacon? Sure. You know anything about him. You know anything about their character or even how they hold to the faith. They should have some good theology behind them.

[8:07] Some knowledge of the truth. Interesting how Paul does this. You'll see that in a moment. They're servants, but it's an important office.

Two offices that Paul gives. Elders, overseers, pastors, and deacons. Paul called them to godly living as servants of the body.

They show the gospel at work in their lives. They live out grace. They're men that live out the gospel. They live out the truth. And they're called to free up the pastors to fulfill their role.

The pastors or the elders or overseers to fill their role. And then those deacons should delegate and get the members to serve. Deacons are called to serve the body and their physical needs and to maintain the unity in the body, freeing up the overseers so that they can adequately shepherd and care for God's church.

I'm touching on the role of a deacon as a whole. That's how they serve the body. They take care of those physical needs.

[9:29] So that way the overseers can shepherd and manage God's church. Something else, they are also the cheerleaders of the church body.

They say, yes, isn't it great to be here? Isn't this such an awesome church? That's the kind of men they are. They're like, rah, rah, shish kumbah.

You're like, yeah, you want to follow. That's the kind of guys they are. They're encouraging to the church. And not just them, but also their wives and the wives of pastors.

We'll look at that in a moment too. And I want to remind you again as we go through these qualities, these characteristic qualities, keep in mind these are qualities that all Christians were called to have.

By God's grace, these characteristic qualities are built into our own lives. But it's just deacons and then elders, they're held to a higher accountability.

[10:33] And like last week, I don't have points for this, you just match, goes through, like that, so I don't have points for you. Notice how he begins verse 8, deacons, likewise, dignified.

Deacon, I said this before, say it again, the word simply means servant. They serve the church. Serve the church body as Jesus served his people by giving his life, so these men do the same. So in one sense, Jesus was a deacon, is, he served. He did not come to be served, but to serve, to deacon, to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus served us. That's what we'll think about and try to wrap our brains around the fact you had Jesus who, as he's ruling and sovereignly sustaining the universe, he's also trying to learn how to walk as a baby.

That's creepy. How does that work? It's true. He sustains everything. He was sustaining everything as he was learning how to walk as a two-year-old or 18 months.

[11 : 53] When did they start walking? One? One. Something like that. But that's what Jesus was doing. He served sinners. sinners. He serves us.

If you're here, you don't know Jesus, he can serve you. Wait, God serves me? Yes. By dying on your behalf, by dying for sinners, you must come to a place where you respond, you repent and trust Christ that he served you.

He paid the ransom for you. You embraced that as your own, personally. So that's what deacons are. They are living examples of Jesus.

They serve the body. It's wise because he uses plural here, deacons. Also, he does the same thing with overseers. It's wise to have a plurality of deacons as well as wise to have a plurality of elders. You should. It's better for the church. Likewise, just like the elders, he must be a man who's dignified. Dignity, which means serious, worthy of respect, noble.

[13 : 10] Notice he says here, not double-tongued, not insincere, indulging in double-talk. One writer puts it like this, saying the same thing twice with the intent to communicate two different things.

In other words, hypocritical, insincere, deceitful. He shouldn't be like that. He says what he means and means what he says.

He's reliable and he stands by it. Notice he also says here the end of verse 8, not addicted to much wine, not devoted or enslaved to much wine.

The idea he doesn't turn his mind towards wine. Drinking is not wrong. You understand that, right? To drink alcohol is not wrong. That's not sinful. One needs wisdom as you're in leadership if you should drink alcohol.

He should not be turning his mind towards wine all the time. And then the last part here, verse 8, we're fond of sordid gain.

[14 : 29] He should not be motivated by any kind of financial gain. It's not about money for him but about a love for Christ and his body. He wants to serve them. I want to serve.

How can I serve? Look at verse 9. Holding to the mystery of faith.

There's no article so that's why I say faith. Holding to the mystery of faith with a clear or pure conscience. They keep or preserve the mystery of faith. The idea is the mystery which faith has embraced.

So he knows the truth. He's familiar with theology, familiar with God's word, with the knowledge of the truth. These men are holding the mystery of the gospel by faith.

They're staying faithful to the gospel, trusting Christ, loving Christ. And notice it's done, he says, in a clear conscience or pure conscience.

[15 : 33] In other words, he lives according to the ethical results brought by trusting Christ and faith. His life displays that. Paul continues to bring up this theme in his letter.

Remember chapter 1 verse 5, the goal of our instruction is love out of a pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith. He keeps bringing this up, pure conscience, good conscience. It's the way he lives.

A deacon's faith changes his life. It changes the way he lives. One writer puts it like this, quote, there's a direct correlation between one's conscience and one's grip on the faith.

His conscience is guided by truth. This important aspect of their character must not be overlooked. Their commitment to the faith and living it out is as vital just as it is for overseers or elders or pastors.

It's just as important for deacons to be like that. Look at verse 10. And let these also first be tested.

[16 : 46] Notice the word also. So it would seem seems that both deacons and overseers should be put to the test.

Both candidates, so to speak, if you will, should be evaluated. Again, all Christians are called to have these type of characteristics and yet these leaders have a higher accountability to it. And he says they should be tested. The word means to give careful and orderly evaluation of these guys. Put them to the test.

Examine them. Notice Paul doesn't tell us how. Why do you do that? But to be sure, the congregation should evaluate the man's life and how he lives his life.

This might seem you shouldn't do this, but it's true. You look at the list and compare them to it. You look at this list in chapter 3 verse 1 through 7 for elders or overseers or pastors.

[18:02] You look at this list for deacons chapter 3 verse 8 through 13. Is this the kind of man that we want? Is this the kind of man that Paul's talking about? Is he this?

So, they were to be scrutinized before they began to serve as deacons and before overseers began to care for God's church. This is important.

It's vital for you as members to do this. You have this responsibility. Did some membership interviews this past week and we talked about how you as members, it's your responsibility to make sure that this church holds to the gospel.

It's your responsibility. Yes, yes, yes, it's my responsibility too. But you are a member. The letters from Paul are written to the churches, not just the elders and deacons. You have a responsibility to make sure this church stays faithful to the gospel.

And you have a responsibility to make sure that men who are leaders fall under these qualifications. Look, it's so much danger that can be avoided by testing and then approving men before being placed in position of authority or serving the body.

[19:31] Pray for their life to be revealed before you consider the man before you. Notice he says in verse 10, then let them serve as deacons after they've been tested.

you've looked at their lives. He says in the end of verse 10, New American Standard says if they are beyond reproach, literally it's being irreproachable.

Being without charge or any kind of accusation, no grounds of accusation against him, no as we said last week for elders or overseers, no skeletons in his closet.

This is the kind of man he's called to be as God's servant. I was going to bring this up, I thought it was good to bring this up because of, again, how this deacons are portrayed in churches across our nation, even our world.

This is the kind of man he's supposed to be as God's servant. I want to take just a moment to touch on this. Deacons are not something.

[20:51] They are not a separate power block in the church. They are subordinate to the overseers or the pastors or elders.

Deacons are not a group that disrupts the church. That's not them. Servants are like that. They are not a separate power block in the church.

They are not a group that disrupts the church. Another one, they are not a unit which does not support the pastors or elders. They are not going to do their own thing. That's not a deacon.

And last, the deacon, deacon, deacon body, not a body that gets people on their side. And you as members, you better not treat them like that. that's not your job. You should not treat them like that. You should not treat them as trying to get them on your side or try to there are some type of authority in the church. They are not that. Members shouldn't treat them like that.

[22:00] And you shouldn't put them on the spot to treat them like that. And then Paul does something weird here in verse 11.

He says women or wives. Which is it? Is it women or wives? There's actually four different views on what Paul means by this.

What does he mean? Well, these could be women. These women are part of the deacons. These women are deacon assistants. They're female assistants to deacons.

Or they're wives of the deacons. And also in some sense the wives of the elders. So those are the four views. Either they're actually part of the deacons.

They're deacon assistants. They're female assistants to deacons. Or they're wives of the deacons. And also the elders. So where I land, I land, I believe Paul addressed here the wives of both deacons and overseers.

[23:09] I think that's what he's doing. Yet even if he meant women in general, as it would be deacon assistants, it's no biggie. Because remember, they're servants.

They're not in a position of authority in the church. They're serving the church. And so some churches have deaconesses. But they actually have elders, pastors, overseers, who are shepherding the church and the deaconesses they're just serving. That works. We just choose not to do that here. Which is, I mean, too serious you. No big deal. No big deal. But notice, whichever view you take on this, notice how these women should be. Dignified. The same word is used for deacons. So dignified, serious, worthy of respect. And then look at this, he says, not malicious gossips. Literally, a devil. Slander, malicious talker. That's where you get the word devil, diabolos. [24 : 18] That's what the word is in Greek. Instead, she speaks highly of all things and of all people.

She speaks positively instead of judging, criticizing, negatively talking bad of others. There is nothing more detrimental to a church than a wife, a pastor, or a deacon who is negative, critical, judgmental, or just downright mean.

Just being in ministry, Chris and I have known too many of these. And we've watched it destroy churches. We've watched a man going into ministry and his wife wants nothing to do with it. And it just creates havoc. There's a reason why Paul says it's vital for women to learn in silence. Careful with her words. That's the kind of woman that she is. Notice he also says, not a malicious gossip, but temperate.

[25 : 44] In other words, she's sober, clear-headed, self-controlled. And the idea here is she doesn't let her emotions get the best of her. She stays in control.

She's a woman who's level-headed, having a rein on her emotions. Temperate, faithful in all things. In other words, she's trustworthy, dependable. You can trust her. You really can. She's faithful within the local body, the local church body.

She's serving her husband, she's serving her family, she's serving her Lord, she's serving his body. Her words and actions can destroy the ministry of her husband, destroy the Christ's body.

No, instead she's careful with that. I told you I'm in the persuasion these are the wives and yet, you know, having said that, there are women in a church, specifically single women who truly display these characteristics and they serve the church body in so many ways.

[27 : 01] Women like Carolyn, who nurture and serve the body well. There's women like that in churches. We have one, at least one, if not more, women.

Notice he goes back to talking about the deacons, verse 12. Let deacons be husbands of one wife. Again, the phrase, a one woman man. The same as with overseers, we talked extensively last week about this subject.

It's probably wives of deacons who fit this criterion too, who have not been divorced. marital fidelity and children who will manage. Notice he says the next part there in verse 12, managing his children and his own household.

It's so true. It's so true. The home is the proving ground for a man's character. Again, a man's home life and ministry life will parallel each other. Just ask my kids, is your dad a jerk?

They say, yes. Fire me. I say that almost tongue in cheek, but almost seriously. He gives such seriousness in this as you're looking at the man, but then yet he, it's like he ends on a, for lack of better terms, happy note.

[28 : 23] Verse 13, for those who serve well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and grace great confidence in faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

So these men that you have, they've served well, or another way to put that, they're in, served in the right way, or they serve commendably.

When that happens, they gain two aspects, a good standing and great confidence, a good standing in the Christian faith, and great boldness in the faith, confidence increased by his faithful service to the body.

That's what happens. So now the question is, well, is this standing and confidence before God? Is it before the congregation? Who's he talking about?

Well, given that they're called to be tested, there in verse 10, it seems to refer to the reputation they gain among the congregation. that's what I think he's saying. And notice he says, a good standing and great confidence in faith.

[29 : 38] It will show their true love for Christ and his body, their trust of Christ and the gospel. So here's kind of the idea of what Paul's talking about here.

the body sees his character, the man begins to serve, the body is blessed by his service, and they also see more of his character come out.

So it's kind of, it's going this way and then it goes back this way and then comes out. That's what it's doing. That's what Paul's talking about. The reason for the good service by these deacons is a good standing and great confidence before the congregation.

congregation. It's a standing and confidence that increases as the body sees him serving faithfully but also as they continue to see his life display Christ.

Which takes getting involved in the lives of these men. You as members of this church. How do they present themselves at home?

[30 : 45] What do they like and private? What do they like when things go south? God makes it known. I said this last week about elders, overseers, pastors and it's also true about deacons.

They are not perfect. They never will be. This looks at the overall direction or trajectory of their lives. does it overall display Jesus?

Paul takes seriously leadership in his church. Leadership in God's church. This is Jesus' body. He takes it seriously.

And you as members, you should do that too. deacons who are servants are also called to be men above reproach.

Just like elders. Just like overseers. To be men whose pursuit of godliness is seen by the way they live their lives. They're servants of the gospel who live the gospel.

[31 : 58] on a car, it's the shocks or the shock absorbers that prevent the car continuing to bounce up and down from it to keep doing this and doing this as you're going down the road, right?

Although, it's shock absorbers that make the car gently bounce up and down. That makes my kids sicker. They get car sick. so it's that little and they're like, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, they'd rather have that real bouncy type of thing.

But you know when it comes to deacons, that's what they do in the body. They make things real smooth so you don't feel it at all.

And they're like, yeah, yeah, yeah, isn't this great? They're like cheerleaders. They serve making things go smoothly, displaying Christ the whole way. That's the kind of men they are.

So, Cailin, you have a high calling. Truthfully, you as members, in about an hour-ish or so, you're going to vote on Cailin to be a deacon.

[33 : 19] You take it seriously. You should. it's providence that I'm preaching on this today and then you get to vote on Cailin to be a deacon today.

So, as we pray, thanking the Lord for speaking to us from His Word, we'll also pray for you, Cailin.

So, Father, we pray for Cailin as you see fit, for the members to vote on him to be a deacon.

And, I know he takes it seriously, so we pray that his life will be displayed and he will be a man who pursues godliness and holiness, serving your body well.

Lord Jesus, thank you for being our servant, serving us. It's amazing, we, Christianity is about God serving humans.

That's an amazing concept. except, but true. You serve by giving your life as a ransom for us. May Cailin live that grace.

[34 : 54] May we as your people live out this gospel of grace. In gospel obedience. Work in us, we pray.

that we will be a church that displays Christ. At this time, I encourage you to just take a few moments, as we do each week, just a time of silence.

maybe you want to take this time and pray for Cailin. Maybe you want to pray for the church as a whole, that we would display these characteristics, reflecting the gospel to yourself, and reminding yourself of the gospel truth.

Whichever, but the idea is that you have a time of silence to fill your mind with truth. Let the truth mull over in your mind and to ponder these things that we've looked at from his word.

So just a few moments, you know, we'll sing, we'll pray, we'll pray for our food, but just this time between you and the Lord, a time of silence, to reflect, to ponder, to remember.

[36 : 27] Do that now, please.