

Commissioned to Serve

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning again. Let me join Brother Lyndon in welcoming all of you here, but in particular our guests.! Well, as has already been announced this morning, we are commissioning a group of deacons and deaconesses.

And so we are now going to transition to our diaconal commissioning service. Today is truly a historic day in the life of this church, because for the first time in 27 years, we will be formally commissioning a group of servants, a group of men and women, to serve this church in diaconal ministry.

We are commissioning this morning nine men and women. And the number was originally 10, but one of them, Grace Cooper, is sick and she is recovering from surgery, so is not able to be a part of this commissioning.

All of the men and women who are being commissioned as deacons and deaconesses this morning have already been serving in different ways in our church.

But we, over a period of time, came to a conviction that there is a benefit to be gained when we follow what scripture does in particular practices.

[1 : 3 3] And so although these individuals had been serving, we never publicly commissioned them before the congregation. And what we're going to see in a short while as we open God's word is that for what would seem to be a very insignificant task in the early church, they publicly commissioned deacons to serve in ministry in the church.

And so this morning, we are seeking to follow that pattern. And as I address our diaconal candidates this morning, I want to also address you as a congregation.

So for the next few moments, I want us to consider this passage of scripture in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 6. And I will read verses 1 through 7.

Acts chapter 6, verses 1 through 7. Acts chapter 6, verses 1 through 7.

I'm reading this morning from the English Standard Version, so if you have another translation, yours will read a little differently. Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

[3 : 1 2] And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.

Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And what they said pleased the whole gathering.

And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. And Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon.

And Parmenas and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles. And they prayed and laid their hands on them.

- [4 : 15] And the word of God continued to increase. And the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. And a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
- Let's pray together. Father, we thank you once again that we're able to gather in this place on this very special occasion.
- Lord, we pause in this moment because we know that without your presence, without your help, without your affirmation, all that we do amounts to nothing.
- So I pray, O Lord, that you would attend to the preaching of your word in this moment. I pray that you would grant me grace to address these candidates and also this congregation.
- And Father, grant us grace all to hear and to obey. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, these seven verses that we just read are the first account we have in Scripture of deacons being appointed.
- [5 : 29] And in a nutshell, what we see from this passage is that deacons are appointed to care for the congregation by meeting needs that arise that have the potential to take the elders away from their primary duties, which is prayer and the ministry of the word.
- This, brothers and sisters, is the foundational reason for appointing deacons and deaconesses, not just to give a position, not just to give recognition.
- It is for this solemn task to care for the needs of the church and to support the elders, enabling them to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.
- This morning, I don't intend to cover all of these verses. I want to confine my attention to a single verse. And that single verse is verse 3. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.
- The early church, when they were appointing deacons, they did so, they were men primarily because if you consider the nature of the work at that time, it was a very strenuous and difficult task, and obviously men were well suited for that.
- [7 : 04] But later in the account of the New Testament, we find that there were women who were serving in diaconal ministry as well, like a woman by the name of Phoebe. But diaconal candidates this morning, as you prepare to be commissioned in the presence of God and in the company of this congregation, I want to charge you to serve in accordance with these three qualifications that we find in Acts chapter 6, verse 3.
- These three qualifications that the apostles established when they were appointing the first deacons in the church.
- They said they had to be of good reputation, full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom. And so first, the acronal candidates, I charge you this morning, serve with a good reputation.
- Part of the evaluation process that you went through included the evaluation of your character, both within and without this church. And I remind you this morning that a good reputation is not just to enter into diaconal ministry.
- It is also necessary to continue in diaconal ministry. And so, by the grace of God, I charge you to serve with a good reputation.
- [8 : 44] When we consider this first account of deacons being appointed, when we consider the duties that they were given, it's easy to wonder whether a good reputation was necessary.
- I mean, after all, all they were doing was serving food to widows and ensuring that the Greek-speaking widows were also cared for.
- But a good reputation was necessary for them and a good reputation is necessary for you. The first deacons were appointed to care for people.

And if those people did not respect them, their ministry was going to be ineffective. And likewise, you're being commissioned to serve people, to care for people.

And if they do not respect you, then your ministry to them will be ineffective. And so, by the grace of God, I say to you this morning, guard your reputation.

[9 : 50] With God's help, be careful not to allow any word or deed of yours to bring reproach on your reputation, both inside this church and outside of this church.

Remember that the very ministry that you are called to is established upon having a good reputation. And the actual candidates, you should be aware that it is not just your personal reputation that is at stake.

Today, you are being commissioned into an office in this church. And so, not only would you be a member of this church, but you would also be an officer of this church, and you would represent this church in a far greater way after being commissioned than you were prior to being commissioned.

And therefore, you are being charged to guard your reputation, not only for your own sake, but also for the sake of this church.

And beyond that, the actual candidates, you are to guard your reputation for the Lord's sake. Because ultimately, you are called by His name.

[11 : 02] You are His child. We all represent the Lord as believers in Christ, but today, more so, this is an obligation upon you.

As it is upon me as an elder of this church, to represent the Lord and guard my reputation because His name will be reproached if I do not.

The same is true for you. And so, as you're being commissioned this morning, serve with a good reputation so that you do not bring reproach on yourself, you do not bring reproach on this church, you do not bring reproach on the name of the Lord.

And second, the actual candidates, you are being commissioned this morning, as you are, I charge you, serve in the fullness of the Spirit.

Serve in the fullness of the Spirit. Here again, when we consider this qualification, the point is very clear. You are to serve the members and support the elders of this church in the fullness of the Spirit and not in the power of the flesh.

[12 : 22] This is a necessary task to perform diaconal ministry. The qualification may seem unusual, it may seem unnecessary, but it is not unusual and it is necessary because you are ultimately doing God's work.

And if you're doing God's work, then you need God's Spirit. You need God's help to be able to do that. And so I charge you this morning, serve in the fullness of the Spirit.

Now, what does that mean? Exactly what does it mean to serve in the fullness of the Spirit? Here's what we read in Ephesians 5, 15 through 21.

These are the words that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus when he was calling them to be filled with the Spirit. This is what he wrote. Notice.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

[13 : 31] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery. Notice. But be filled with the Spirit.

Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The Acklin Candidates, this is the call to be filled with the Spirit. And notice, it is to all believers. This is to all believers.

But it is especially so for those who would be set apart as deacons and deaconesses to serve God's church.

To be filled with the Spirit is not just a one-time act or experience that we have and we leave behind us, but the very language that Paul uses is to be filled with the Spirit in an ongoing way.

[14 : 50] And he actually tells us how we can do this in an ongoing way in verses 19 through 21. He tells us by addressing one another in psalms. That means spending time in God's Word.

And hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

we can be filled with the Spirit doing normal things like working and playing and studying. We can be filled with the Spirit being a husband, being a wife, being a father, being a mother, being a child.

We can be filled with the Spirit as we live life in a normal way. But if we fill ourselves with other things, if we fill ourselves with things that dull our souls and crowd out our spirit and crowd out the fullness of the Spirit in our lives, we will not be full of the Spirit.

I think you'd all agree with me that social media can be overwhelming and many people, Christians included, are filled with it. We have to manage our hearts, we have to manage our lives in such a way that we can be filled with the Spirit in an ongoing way.

[16 : 28] Despite all the distractions, despite all the things that compete for our attention, we can be filled with the Spirit in this noisy and crazy, busy world.

But being filled with the Spirit also speaks about dependence on the Spirit. And it's funny I want to say to you, the actual candidates, because many of you are already serving and perhaps the thought may be, well, I know how to do this or that, some of you will have new responsibilities, but I want to encourage you to come to a fresh dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Come to the Lord with a fresh dependence that you may view your work and that you may carry out your work with a dependence on the Spirit.

And the results have to be different. They cannot be the same. It cannot and will not be business as usual. And so this morning as you are being commissioned, I charge you, serve in the fullness of the Spirit.

and third and finally, I charge you to serve with the wisdom of God.

[17 : 51] Once again, when we consider the work that the first deacons were called to do, it doesn't seem like it needed wisdom. On the face of it, it didn't seem like you needed a whole lot of wisdom to make sure that the widows got the food that they were supposed to get.

Yet, this was one of the requirements that was laid out. But when we think about it, they really needed wisdom. When you consider this account, you realize that there was more than just an oversight taking place in this church.

What you realize is that this church had become divided. this church had become divided between the Greek speakers and the Hebrew speakers. Because when you think about it, how is it that only the Greek speaking widows were neglected?

And I believe that Luke, the writer of Acts, chose his words carefully when he decided to say they were not just overlooked, they were neglected.

And so, people being people, you can imagine the tensions were rising in this church. And the deacons needed wisdom to serve in this particular context.

[19 : 12] And it is naive to think that once you appoint deacons that all the ill feelings and the walls would just go away simply because you appointed deacons.

Now, those deacons needed wisdom as they went about their work as they dealt with the various factions in the church. They needed wisdom. And you need wisdom.

You need wisdom because it is required to serve in deaconal ministry. We offer training, just a one-day seminar, and tried our best to prepare you for aspects of the deacons ministry that you will face.

But the truth is, if we took ten years to do that, we could never prepare you for every single thing that you will face. And that's why you need wisdom. You need wisdom because you're going to experience particular things that you weren't trained for, particular things that are just not so straightforward, things where you even need discernment.

And so today you need to be crying out to God, and every day, God give me wisdom. And it's not just wisdom in terms of human wisdom because the Bible tells us there is something called human wisdom, a worldly wisdom, and God's wisdom.

[20 : 41] Listen to how James describes the wisdom that we all need and especially that you need. In James 3, 13-18, James writes, who is wise and understanding among you?

By his good conduct, let him show his works in meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

Notice, this is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

I'll read that again, verse 15. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

But notice, wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

[22 : 03] And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. the accolade candidates, you need this wisdom.

You need this wisdom that is from above. And without it, we substitute that other wisdom, that other wisdom that James tells us is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic, and it will result in strife.

It will result in selfish ambition and jealousy and disorder and every vile practice. And so this morning I say to you, you need the wisdom of God.

Again, some of you will be assuming new responsibilities, for that you will need God's wisdom. And in acknowledging God's wisdom, your need for God's wisdom every day, crying out to him every day for his wisdom, is an expression of humility, an expression that you need wisdom from on high.

And scripture says that God will give it. He will give it. You need it, and he will give it. And so diacal candidates, I charge you today, serve with a good reputation, serve in the fullness of the spirit, and serve with the wisdom of God.

[23 : 32] God. Now why do you need to do this? Why should you serve this way?

Why should you be mindful of your reputation, mindful of your need for the fullness of the spirit, mindful of your need for God's wisdom? Why should you do this?

But the reason you should do this is the task that you're committing to is no trite and insignificant task. It is to serve the people of God for whom Christ died.

It is to serve precious saints for whom Jesus Christ came to this earth, lived the perfect life on their behalf, went to Calvary's cross as a substitute for their sins, bore their sins, endured God's wrath for their sins so that God can forgive them and reconcile them to himself and call them his sons and his daughters.

You're committing and being commissioned to serve the people of God, purchased not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 02] And so today, this is a worthy and a noble reason for you to commit yourselves in this particular way. Yes, these are brothers and sisters who you know, but don't forget, ultimately, they're God's children.

They're precious children. And these are ones that you know, there's some that you yet don't know who will come, and you must see them all the same, that you are being commissioned to serve the precious purchase of Jesus Christ.

Now let me say a few words to you, the congregation of this church. church. These theachnoid candidates are not being commissioned to serve in a vacuum.

They're being commissioned to serve you. And as such, since they're being commissioned to serve you, I charge you to receive them.

We had congregational participation in the process, of identifying and affirming these deacons and deaconesses. They were all unanimously affirmed without exception.

[26 : 24] And so congregation, I say to you that I charge you to receive them. Receive them as your servants. Receive them as those who will care for you.

Support them in their work. Cooperate with them. And most of all, I ask you to pray for them. I ask you to do something this morning.

Ask the Lord to help you to remember whenever you are tempted to criticize them, to pray for them. When you have attempted to criticize them, ask yourself, have I prayed for them?

And it doesn't mean that you can't criticize. We can. but if the accent is on criticism more than prayer, that's out of balance. We want to be praying for them more than you may bring criticism to them.

And if you bring criticism, let it be constructive. Let it be suggestive. Let it be helpful. But not, I don't like how you do that.

[27 : 35] No. Bring it in a constructive way. But we're now going to transition to the act of commissioning. I'm going to ask the candidates to come and please just stand to the front as far back as you can.

to the act of the act of the candidates in the presence of God and before this congregation.

I'm now going to ask you nine questions as you're being commissioned to serve as deacons and deaconesses in this church.

Do you affirm, do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Do you believe the scriptures, the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament to be the word of God?

[29 : 05] Totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

Do you sincerely declare before God that you believe all the articles and points of doctrine contained in Kingdom Life's statement of faith fully agree with the scriptures?

Do you own that statement as the statement and confession of your faith? do you promise that if in the future you come to have reservation about any of these doctrines, you will share these reservations with your eldership?

Do you promise to faithfully serve the members and support the elders of this church so that the needs of the congregation are met and the elders can give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word?

Do you promise to keep a close watch on yourself and to walk humbly before others and seek to faithfully and sincerely maintain in your life the qualifications of the office of deacon to which you are being commissioned?

[30 : 40] do you promise to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel and to show yourself in all respects in action and in speech to be a model of good works integrity and dignity so that neither the church nor our savior Jesus Christ nor the gospel may be brought into reproach?

do you promise to continually seek the gifts of the spirit that you may serve God's people not in the energy of the flesh but in the power of the Holy Spirit and to carry out your duties without the fear of man?

Now congregation as I mentioned earlier these men and women will not be serving in a vacuum they will be serving you and so I have two questions for you which I trust you will be able to unanimously say I do to sorry we do to these questions two questions to you the people of Kingdom Life Church sincerely declare before God that you receive sisters Michelle Bain Alexei Moss Orly Johnson Demetria Roll Rosalie Prophet and Myrna Wilson as deaconesses and brothers Cyril Gardner William Johnson and Clarence Roll as deacons sounds like some of you do and we read that again and I want to if others aren't you bellow out for them do you the people of Kingdom

Life Church sincerely declare before God that you receive sisters Michelle Bain Alexei Moss Orly Johnson Demetria Roll Rosalie Prophet and Myrna Wilson as deaconesses and brothers Cyril Gardner William Johnson and Clarence Roll as deacons thank you do you promise to encourage them cooperate with them and pray for them in their labors and to assist them in their duties as they care for you and support the elders for the good of our church and the glory of God let's bow in prayer Father we thank you this morning that we are gathered in this place not just in the presence of one another but ultimately in your presence and in your sight and

Lord ultimately it is your blessing it is your approval it is your commissioning that is essential in this service today and Father we commit and commend these candidates to you Lord you know them by name and nature and circumstance Father we ask in the name of Jesus that you would indeed be their sufficiency for the ministries that you have called them to in the context of this local church Lord I pray that each one would serve for the honor and glory of God I pray oh Lord that you would help each one to walk in a manner that is worthy of the calling that you have given them in Christ but also the calling that you have given them in diaconal ministry oh Lord I pray that with the help of your spirit they will indeed guard their reputations

[34 : 54] I pray that with the help of the spirit they would indeed serve in the fullness of the spirit I pray that with the help of the spirit they would indeed serve with the wisdom of God Father we ask today that you would put your hand upon them Lord above my hands being placed on them I pray!

that there would be a sense that you are laying your hand upon Lord that you would endow them today with an endowment for service by your Holy Spirit that they would truly not serve in the energy of the flesh but they would serve in the power of the spirit and Father we pray for us as a church Lord that in the same way that the early church were blessed by having deacons appointed!

in the same way that the word of God grew and multiplied Lord let that be our experience as well Father God I pray that you would cause the deacons and the deaconesses to serve the church in such a way Lord that I would be able to give myself fully to prayer and to the ministry of the word and Lord may the fruit of it all be for the good of this church and for the glory of your name and so Lord today we commend and we commission this group of deacons and deaconesses to you Michelle I commission you as a deaconess in this church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit I commission you as a deaconess in this church in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Demetria Demetria I commission you as a deaconess in this church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit I deaconess this church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit I commission you as a deaconess in this church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

William, I commission you as a deacon in this church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Brother Cyril, I commission you as a deacon in this church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[38 : 26] Father, we commend them to you. That your servants, Lord, put your spirit upon them.

Enable them, Lord, to be your servants in a conscious way as they go about their duties, remembering that you equip your saints, you empower your saints for the ministry.

So, Lord, keep your hand upon them, we pray. And, Lord, I pray for this congregation as well. I commend them to you, Lord. Father, may they receive this group of deacons and deaconesses.

And, Lord, together may we work for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this local church and beyond. And we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who gave himself, that sinners like us can be reconciled to you.

It's in his name we pray. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. Well, we have now come to the end of our deaconal commissioning service.

[39 : 51] And Brother Tim Seeley is now going to come and pray our closing prayer. And as mentioned, we would love to have all of you to remain today.

This is a day of fitting celebration and fitting congratulations for these who have offered themselves to serve in this way.

Please come, Tim. And Tim will also pray for our food. Let's pray.

Father, it is a joy to be in your house this morning and to participate in this time, this time of recognition of those that have been here and have served.

God, we know that as we have read and understand your word, that we are, each of us, to serve in our own way. God, as we read in Hebrews 13 that we are to offer our bodies as a pleasing sacrifice to you.

[41 : 01] These men and women have been commissioned this morning. It is something that they have done and continue to do.

God, as we are challenged by your word and to live our lives as service to you, we pray that as we go about this week and as we continue on this journey, that we would not neglect to do what is good and right and to share what we have and to sacrifice as you have asked us to do, that we would be pleasing and a pleasing sacrifice to you.

God, as we go from this place, may your spirit just be with us and just illumine our hearts and ignite that flame that is within us to live out the words that we heard this morning.

God, may you be glorified in all that is said and done. Lord, as we are about to partake of this food, we are grateful for it. We are just grateful for all that you've done for us, for your death and resurrection.

As we fellowship together, may you be lifted high and may we just keep you as the center of our conversation. God, now may the God of peace, who brought from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good and may you do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ.

[42 : 43] To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. Go in peace.