

# The Biblical Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons

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[ 0 : 00 ] Isn't it amazing that a holy God would choose to love unholy us? I just find that to be incredible as I wake up every day and thank God for a new day to live and breathe and go about my business.

That He would look down or look at me and choose to love me in spite of myself. And the crazy thing about it is that He created us and knew that we would be where we are now in need of Him. But I think it's by design. And it is by design because He knew that when He created us that Adam and Eve would fail. Introduced sin into the world.

And the whole plan all along has been the need for a Savior. And we need a Savior. And we need Jesus. Thank God that we have Him and He is available to us.

Well, this morning, I want to continue our conversation about church leadership. It was up again last week. When Barbara and I left Moss Bluff and moved to Leesville, Louisiana in 2006, we rented out our house for the 12 years we were gone.

[ 1 : 26 ] And we had four renters that lived in the house. Each left their own mark in those 12 years. Some for the good and some for the not so good.

We had one set of renters that did some great work on the house. They rewired the house, added some wall sockets, added some light fixtures and ceiling fans, and really did a great job.

And I was amazed at the work they did and so happy for the work they did. Except for one day when I went to visit them, one of them had taken a motorcycle apart in the dining room.

And I was amazed that, number one, that a motorcycle had so many parts. But they were all on our dining room table, which we had left behind a beautiful dining room table, by the way.

And I could feel my blood pressure rising as I saw the disassembled motorcycle lagging on our dining room table, thinking we'll never be able to get the oil off that table.

[ 2 : 28 ] We ate on it this morning, didn't we, Barbara? And so it's okay. It's still there. Not only is our house different than it was when we left in 2006, but Moss Bluff is a different place as well.

And Lake Charles is too. You know, when we leave a place and we return sometimes later, there's bound to be some things that have changed. Change is inevitable. Change is going to happen.

Some things change for the good, some things not so good. And with that as a backdrop this morning, as we launch it to the second part of my sermon on church leadership, what if Peter and the other apostles who were there at Pentecost, filled with the Holy Spirit, and Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, got up and preached the first sermon, and immediately 3,000 people became followers of Jesus Christ.

What if they, along with the Apostle Paul, came back here and visited the 21st century American church? Things have changed since they were here.

Here are the guys who started the church 2,000 years ago. Here's Paul who planted churches. Play along with me in this scenario, but think about this.

[ 3 : 48 ] What if they came back and saw the changes that have taken place over the 2,000 years since they left? Would they say to us, hey, good job, guys.

Keep it up. Keep doing what you're doing. We like what we see. You've got some great things going on. You've got a great building you're meeting in. You've got great programs, great preaching, great praise teams.

We like what we see. We never imagined that it would turn out this way. Or would they say, guys, this is nowhere near what we thought the church would turn out to be.

But then what if they left the good old U.S. of A. and they traveled halfway around the world with the China and saw how they did church? Would they find the Chinese way of doing church in the Chinese praise songs, in the Chinese praise teams, whatever that sounds like and looks like, would that be more in line of what they thought the church might look like back in the first century? And by the way, contrary to popular belief, the church, the Christian church, is not outlawed in China. China recognizes Christianity as one of about six or seven religions that are acceptable under Chinese government rules.

[ 5 : 06 ] However, the Christian church in China is so heavily regulated that the Christians there choose to meet underground, to meet in private. What if the apostles went to Africa where the meeting places are under trees and not in buildings at all in some areas of Africa?

Is there a right way to do church? Church. There is, but as we know, it's got nothing to do with buildings. As we know, it's got nothing to do with programs.

There's nothing wrong with praise teams in the way we do worship in the U.S. of A. But culture changes, and so do worship styles change as well.

But have we become so ritualized and legalized in the way that we do Christianity that the first century Christians and apostles wouldn't recognize the church they founded?

When Jesus left, he left us with just two commandments. Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Love your neighbor as yourself. And he did leave out one glaring commandment that was in the Ten Commandments.

[ 6 : 25 ] Remember to keep the Sabbath holy. It's not in his two commandments. By the way, what day is the Sabbath on? Saturday.

So we meet on Sunday. Two times, and once on Wednesday. Did you know that it's in this church's constitution that we meet on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night?

What if we met on Saturday? The Sabbath. What if we met on Tuesday and that was it? So what? What does it matter? What day we meet on?

As long as we meet. What does Hebrews 10.25 say? Yes. It tells us what to do.

It doesn't tell us when to do it. Nor does it tell us how many times to do it. Why are we legislating when we're to meet?

[ 7 : 27 ] Think about this. When the church started way back there in Acts chapter 2, there was no Acts chapter 2. There was no book of Acts. Because the book of Acts was being written right there and then.

In fact, there was no New Testament for the first century Christians to go by to find out how to do church. It was almost 300 years later after the church started that there was even a New Testament for the church to use.

And did you know that after the Apostle Paul was no longer on the scene, there was no missionary of his caliber out planting churches until hundreds of years later? But here's the deal.

With no buildings, no programs, no potlucks, no praise teams, guess what? The church grew and it grew quickly.

How is that possible? With all the accoutrements, without all the accoutrements. That's your word for the day, accoutrement. Everybody say accoutrement. Accoutrement.

[ 8 : 34 ] Without all the accoutrements that we think we should have, the first century church didn't have and they grew quickly.

Christianity spread really quick without all the things we think are necessary for us to grow. But here's the deal, and this is surprising.

Shortly after the church began, persecution of the church began as well. Why? Because Christianity and the Roman Empire was not recognized as a legitimate religion.

In fact, Christianity was banned. And because it wasn't a legitimate religion, every attempt was made to destroy the church.

But not only was it not destroyed, it continued to grow. It could not be stopped. No buildings, no programs, no nothing compared to what we think is necessary today to have church.

[ 9 : 40 ] In fact, it wasn't until the year 231, 231, back when Raymond Lager was just a child, that the first so-called church building was built.

And the only reason it was built was because churches up until that point met in houses, and it had simply outgrown the houses where they met. So they had to build a much larger place for them to meet.

And because Christianity was illegal, Christians were afraid to meet out in the open. Think about it. On the surface, Christianity looked like it could be doomed to failure.

Who would want to join a religion that was under persecution? What if the visiting team went out to visit on their neighborhood, knocked on the door, and said, we'd like to visit you for a moment and ask you to come to our church.

We're right down the road. We beat every whatever. We'd love for you to come. Oh, and by the way, if you come, you may be killed. No buildings.

[10:48] Persecution. No money. No social status. There was nothing that would cause anybody to think that this movement would be successful. No media.

No live streaming. No. But what did matter was their hearts. They had faith. They had each other. They had concern for each other.

They had confidence in what they were doing as believers in regard to each other. And that took themselves outside the walls of the church and into their communities. And that same love they showed each other and expressed with each other, care and concern for each other, they took outside the walls into the community and did the same for them.

That's how they grew. But did you know that in China, where Christianity looks a lot like the first century church, Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds?

Barbara read the result of a survey to me this morning. It was from 2018, but that's not too far past.

[11:57] That in America, about 41% of Christians attend church on a regular basis. Whereas on the other side of the world, 91% professed Christians attend church on a regular basis.

And even in this country, there are states that there's only about 20% of Christians responding to this survey attend church on a regular basis.

Alabama was number one. Roll Tide. Louisiana was number two. Right, Barbara? Three? Three? Three? Three? What do they know that we don't?

And here we have buildings, programs, live streaming, and still we're quickly entering into a post-church, post-Christianity culture in this country.

It's already happened in Europe. What's the attraction then if it's not the buildings, not the programs, not the praise teams? Why are they growing in places where they don't have those things and we're not?

[13:14] Last week I said, if you build it, they will come is not a good motto for the church. It is for Starbucks. We have a new Starbucks in Moss Bluff, and ever since it opened, there's been a line around the building.

What do they have there? They have coffee, they have hot chocolate, and they have pastries. They don't have anything for a soul. They don't have anything for somebody who's hurting and needs Jesus, but there's a line around the building all the time waiting to get hot coffee.

That's it. One of the biggest things that people saw the early church doing was they just simply cared for each other and for the community.

You know, there might have been 20 or so house churches in Philippi, but it was still considered one church, the Philippian church, because all the churches were connected, kind of like the Camp Pearl Ministry churches, a connection.

They shared Paul's letters. They helped each other. They helped the sick, the hungry, the poor. They fed the poor, the hungry. That's it. And people were attracted to that.

[14:30] This morning, I'm here to wrap up the two-part series on church leadership. As the new church began, as we discussed last week, the apostles had their hands full just overseeing the church, doing what apostles and today's elders do.

They were so busy overseeing the church, but they were also getting weighed down with caring for the physical needs of the people as well. So they appointed seven men to do that job.

These seven men waited or served or diakonos, the Greek word for deacon, the needs of the people while the apostles devoted their time to studying scriptures, prayer, and overseeing the church.

So last week, we looked at the qualification for elders. This week, we're going to look at the qualification for deacons. Remember, elders and deacons are not the same office.

If they were the same office, then there wouldn't be elders and deacons. They didn't have the same jobs. They don't do the same things in the church. But their qualifications are almost identical, but their jobs within the body are completely different.

[ 15 : 43 ] So once again, we're going to look into 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy chapter 3. 1 Timothy chapter 3.

Beginning in verse 8. Father, thank you for your word. Your word is so clear. And sometimes we overlook the fact that it is so clear.

And we eisegete instead of exegete. We read things into it that is not there. And Father William, may we not be guilty of doing that. May we see what is there and pull it out and put it to use.

So bless our time now as we read your word in Jesus' name. Amen. Likewise, deacons must. Everybody say must. We did this last week. Must. Be reverent.

Not double-tongued. Not given to much wine. Not greedy for money. Holding the mystery of the faith. With a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested.

[ 17 : 04 ] Then let them serve as deacons. Being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent. Not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

Let deacons be the husbands of one wife. Ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons. Obtain for themselves a good standing. And great boldness in the faith.

Which is in Christ Jesus. I've got just two points as I did last week for you this morning. The requirements for a deacon. And the reward for a deacon.

So Timothy was a young pastor. Paul was writing to. Anybody know what church Timothy pastored? The church at Ephesus.

And Paul starts his list of qualifications for the deacons the same way he started the qualifications. For elders with the word must. Must means these qualifications are non-negotiable.

[ 18 : 07 ] They are non-debatable. He must be reverent. We know what that is. Not reverent, but reverent. And not double-tongued.

What does double-tongued mean? Dishonest. Dishonest. Dishonest. Dishonest. Dishonest. Yeah. Say one thing and meaning something else.

Dishonest. Dishonest. Dishonest. Like Bertha, Are there any Berthas here? It's like, Bertha, that dress looks amazing on you.

And I turn to Nathan and say, Bertha looks like a cow in that dress. Moo, moo. that's double tongue not given to much wine apparently Ephesus was known as a place of alcohol abuse and so Paul didn't want his church leaders don't go out there and join the other Ephesians into abusing alcohol not greedy holding to the mystery of the faith in other words the deep truths of the faith doctrinally sound biblically sound but let these also first be tested then let them serve as deacons after being found blameless you mean there's a test to become a deacon Paul's not saying that deacons have to take a test and have a score of 70-72 in order to pass it it means elders should watch deacon candidates for a period of time to see how they respond to others in the church see how they fit into the church as just regular members first before they become leaders of that church how do they respond to each other how do they interact with people in the church how do they interact with people outside the church how do they act with people on the job he must be found blameless I was told when I became a pastor that it's better to have no deacons than the wrong deacons watch what goes on in their home life if an elder or deacon can't lead at home or won't lead at home then he cannot lead in the house of God watch the leader candidate for a period of time it may give you a clue whether or not he's an appropriate leader for that particular body then there are the requirements even for the deacons' wives these are also musts must be reverent must not be a slanderer what does a slanderer do?

[ 20 : 59 ] what does that mean? what does that mean? what does that mean? yes yeah especially talk ugly about others for the purpose of hurting them so deacons' wives should not do that temperate, level-headed, easy-going, faithful in all things if you're a deacon or deacon candidate the way your wife acts is important I had a situation when I was pastor at Grace Bible Church in Leesville unfortunately there was a lady in the church it's always the ladies, right?

Paul had to deal with it in the Philippian church two ladies but there was a lady that was causing havoc in our church in Leesville and I was forced to deal with it I was forced to confront it and her husband and I were good friends great guy but she was causing some issues and I thought well I'll call one of the pastors previously of Grace and find out how he dealt with the situation so I got on the phone and I called him and I said look here's the issue here's what's going on how did you deal with it?

and he said I didn't that's why you have to and I did and I knew what the I knew what the fallout was going to be I didn't want it to be that but it was they left the church and took people with him if you're a deacon or deacon candidate the way your wife acts is important and the reason I had to deal with it was because one of the elders came to me and said her husband needed to be a deacon I said whoa so deacons have requirements but there's also a reward it's verse 13 verse 13 says for those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus in other words deacons who do their jobs well get two rewards basically they get the respect from those in the congregation if they're doing their job selflessly ministering to the church and if they get a reward for themselves because it builds confidence in them that their relationship with the Lord is improving if you serve other people your relationship with the Lord improves here's a great test for a potential leader or elder or deacon last week you saw that the very first qualification for an elder or overseer is they want to do the job they have to have a desire to do it but a question when we are considering a leader is why did they want to do it one of the reasons they want to serve is it pure or is it status is it they want to serve the people or is it power is it for resume building or is it to meet needs of the people in the fellowship is it for all the things the world says are important for leaders or is it humbly submitting to the leadership of the elders in the case of deacons and the elders submitting to the Lord

Peter the other apostles along with Paul won't be coming back to see how we do church but what if they did what will they think of what we're doing with the church they begin we'll never know but there is one person who is watching everything we do and we should care about what that person sees and that is the Lord Jesus Christ after all it was his idea for this the church he's the one we need to please Bible's clear the church needs leaders but not just any leader will do to fill a spot it's got to be somebody who must look like him deacons potential deacons how does

Jesus look on you are you bringing glory and honor to the one we should be bringing glory and honor to with our lives and for the rest of us let's not get too caught up on the 21st century American way of doing church maybe we can learn something from the first century church after all it seemed like it was pretty successful nothing could stop the first century church and nothing can stop us if we do the things that the Bible says for us to do as a church in a moment the pastor is going to come and share some things with you is that still on track about a revitalization prospect for the church in the coming year but before that

[ 27 : 21 ] I want to get very real and very sincere with you he'll present some proposals he'll present some things to you but until we as a congregation faith Bible church become convicted that we need to make some changes changes will never happen that conviction must come from the Holy Spirit it cannot come from Pastor Bart it cannot come from anybody else it has to come from the Holy Spirit dealing directly with our hearts telling us there has to be a change and that change begins with you individually and we have to make a commitment to God that we're going to do things right we're going to do things the way the Bible says we're going to do things or if we're not going to do it let's lock these doors turn out the lights and let's go home what are we going to do church is this going to be status quo or are we going to move forward and do something different and do something new and be an acts kind of church it begins with a heart we can look at what pastor's going to present and praise

God he's put some work into that and wants to do some changes and move us forward but until us individually in our hearts move forward into our relationship with God and are committed to letting the Holy Spirit guide us and lead us we're not going anywhere either we're moved by the Holy Spirit or we're not I don't want to be too preachy this morning we've got to do it as that guy said on that plane that was going down let's roll father let us not be consumed with Americanism of the church let us be consumed with the church on fire for you it may begin our hearts revival begins in the heart and I pray the revival starts in our hearts this day in Jesus name amen hymn the church we know who has been working

I see through this ■ this