

Servants of the Lord Jesus and His Church

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word.

Take your Bibles if you would and turn with me to Acts chapter 6. So these guys won't be ordained tonight because they've both been in the ministry previously as deacons and leaders in churches.

And so we're just accepting them into our church. And men of the church have voted. And if you're excited about them being deacons, I'd like to hear you vote.

So if you're excited about them being deacons in our church, would you say amen? Okay, so you just voted about them being deacons. In a minute, we'll introduce all the deacons.

I'd like to talk to you from Acts chapter 6 about the servants of the Lord, the Lord Jesus and His church. My microphone is working, correct? Okay.

[0 : 57] The Bible says in Acts 6.1, And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because the widows were neglected in the daily menstruation.

And the twelve called the disciples unto them and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word and to saying, Please, the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicholas, a proselyt of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles.

And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them, and the Word of God increased. And the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith.

Father, I pray that you'd help our church to understand what you're doing when you allow us to name men to serve in the position of deacon at Vision Baptist Church.

[2 : 12] I pray you'd help our people to understand who these people are and what they do and the position you want them to have. And I pray to your God that tonight, from the Word of God, our people might grow and learn in this, and that as a church we might become stronger and more stable and more able to do the work that you have for us.

In Jesus' precious name, amen. Well, I want to take you through several parts of the Bible real quickly about deacons, and I'm going to give you what is, honestly, I believe a biblical opinion, and you'll have to study the Bible out for yourself.

We have deacons at our church to provide, number one, mutual accountability, mutual accountability. Pastors are not the only authority in the church and never should be.

The Bible does speak of the fact that a pastor has some authority. So take your Bibles and go with me. I just want to show you what the Bible teaches as we lay a foundation for the next however many years it is before the Lord Jesus comes.

1 Timothy 3.5 says, For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? That's talking about a bishop. The bishop, the elder, and the pastor are the same guy.

[3 : 22] Those words are basically synonymous, even though they speak of different aspects of his job. And if you have your Bible open, I want you to underline he's got to rule his own house. And the second part, it says he has to take care of the church of God.

And so I'd like to let you know the word take care there means to give a proper consideration to some issue or matter. It's the idea to be concerned about something.

So he's to be concerned about the church of God. It's to give attention about how to respond. It's the exact phrase the Bible uses in the story of the Good Samaritan.

It says in Luke chapter 10 and verse 34, And he went out and bound up his wounds and pouring in oil and wine and set him on his own beast and brought him into an inn and took care of him.

Underline took care. That's the exact same Greek word, the original word in the Bible. It's the exact word of what it meant. It's really not a bossy around word. It's really about a I'm here to serve you word.

[4 : 21] I'm going to take care of you. In verse 35 he says, So in the Bible, the Bible talks about us, the pastor as being a leader in his own home.

He rules his own home and he takes care of the church of God. The Bible also uses the phrase that elders do rule in churches. In 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 17, the Bible said, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor.

You should underline in your Bible, elders that rule well. They be counted worthy of double honor. Then he goes on to say, The scripture says, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, that labor is worthy of his reward.

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses, them that sin, elders that sin, rebuke before all that others may fear. That elder in verse 17 is a pastor.

Pastor, bishop, elder. You can pretty well look at it if you check it out. He's laboring in the word and he's laboring in doctrine, but he is ruling. That's what a bishop actually does.

[5 : 30] The word rule here means to be over, to preside, to be the master of a house, to lead, to guide, to shepherd. It's used in the Bible in Romans chapter 12 and verse 8 about the idea of administration.

It says in Romans 12, 8, He that exhorteth on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity. He that ruleth with diligence. He that has administration. If you're in charge of a place, do a good job of it.

1 Thessalonians 5, 12 says that it's about being over some people. We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord.

It's that same identical word for rule there. It's also the word that's used about you as parents. 1 Timothy 3, 4, 1, That ruleth well his own house and has his children in subjection with all gravity.

The popular ministry model today that you may not know about is elder rule. That's the pastor doesn't respond to the congregation but to an outside board of pastors and friends.

[6 : 35] There might be a group of elders even in a church that make decisions and the church would then be informed. I want to show you what I believe is true in our church and ought to be true and it's found in Acts chapter 6.

The passage we just read. Take your Bible and go back there with me real quickly. The Bible says in 6, 2, the Bible says that the 12, the men, that the apostles, one guy had messed up, Judas.

They'd replaced him with another guy and now there are 12 again and they're in charge and leading the church. There are the pastors and the bishop, the elder, the pastor, the spiritual leaders.

They're apostles. By the way, we are not apostles. We're not expected to be apostles. These are special men that God had put there and they saw that the needs in the church weren't being met.

So there were some widows in the church. There were two groups of widows. There were Greek widows and there were Hebrew widows and the Greek widows didn't feel like they were getting fair treatment. I'm sure the Hebrew widows felt like they could have more if the Greek widows weren't getting so much.

[7 : 35] And so the 12 had an idea. Look if you would at verse 3. So there was leadership. There was a leadership idea in verse 3. They said, hey, church, wherefore, brethren, look you out among you, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

I think it's an extremely interesting way a church ought to operate. I believe in congregational leadership with pastoral leadership there, and I think this teaches it.

In verse 3, it was the idea of the apostles. He said, look them out. They picked how many men? Seven. They picked out how many qualities, honest report, full of the Holy Ghost of wisdom, and they said, and we will put them in charge of this business.

So they did. And if you look at verse 5, the congregation was pleased. Look at 5. That means the congregation had a vote. I don't know if they voted. We vote. Our men vote.

But the point was the congregation, it says in the saying, please the congregation, and they picked the following seven men. And they sat them before the apostles.

[8 : 40] In verse 6, it says, and whom they sat before the apostles. And when they prayed, they laid their hands on them. And so they picked them. The apostles walked out, and they said, guys, we really got to do something.

We got an idea. We'd like to put some men in charge of some ministries here. They would take some pressure off the pastors so the pastors could be doing some other things. And these men could be taking care of some other problems that are going on. We want it to be seven guys.

Why'd they want seven? I don't know because that's how many they wanted. And then it said, and these are the qualifications, and they're very obviously good qualifications. And they said, y'all pick them. When you pick them, you bring them back, we'll approve them.

We'll approve them, and then we'll appoint them, and then we'll lay hands on them, and we'll put them to doing the work. And when they did, the ministry took off and grew because of the way they worked together.

There was in Bible times, and it still goes on in almost every church, a doctrine of the Nicolaitans. I think that talks about people in church that want rank and privilege among God's people.

[9 : 40] They want to conquer the people. They want to be up above others. It's like pastors who really think for some reason God made them different. They don't put their pants on the same way the other guy does.

They don't sin like the other guy does, and they begin to really think of themselves as somebody else. And so the Catholic Church really took this to the nth degree, didn't they? They have regular people, and they got deacons, and then they got priests, and then they got bishops, and then they got cardinals, and then they got the pope.

And when the pope speaks, it's just like Jesus talking because whenever he gets to talk, he can do that. That's just not a biblical way. Jesus even told his people, don't call me.

Don't call any man rabbi. Don't call anybody master. Don't call anybody father because you're all brothers. So let's just keep it that way. So that was the idea. In the Bible in 3 John verse 9, there was a guy named Diotrephes, and he loved to have the preeminence, and he would like to choose who got to come to church and who didn't get to come to church.

In verse 10, it says he doesn't receive the brethren, and he forbids anybody who would receive them, and he kicks them out of the church. There's been this attitude, and it caused a false division in the church.

[10 : 48] Preachers, and you probably don't know this, but among preachers, there's this idea that the pastor has some special anointing that really lifts him above everybody else.

And even among preachers, there's only one real anointed in the church, and that would be the senior pastor. Everybody else isn't quite anointed. These missionaries aren't anointed. They need to understand I'm the anointed one.

That's a great thing to say, except it's not in the Bible anywhere. And since I can't find it in the Bible, we just won't believe it. Can you say amen? They may can preach it somewhere else, but we won't be able to because we chose to go with the Bible as our authority.

And in the Bible, God said in 1 Peter 2 and verse 9, you are a chosen generation. You, all of you guys, you're a royal priesthood. You're a holy nation.

You're a peculiar people, and he wants you to show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. In Revelation chapter 1 and verse 6, he said he made us kings and priests.

[11 : 51] I'm sitting in a room full of priests. I'm sitting in a room full of kings because of Jesus Christ, according to the Bible. We all have equal access. It's not like when I call heaven, God says, hold it, guys.

All you peons, hold on. A pastor, an anointed one, is calling me. And when the anointed call me, the special red light flashes, so I get to get to them first. Hebrews 10, 19 says, having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Brethren, you ought to underline that in verse 19. In verse 20, it says, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. Having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near.

Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. He's talking to us. So like you said, we want accountability.

You know, a church ought not be pastor-dominated, pastor-ran. You've got to jump every time the pastor speaks. That ought never be the attitude among God's people.

[12 : 55] Pastor ought to be a guy God gifted to speak and teach and help with the Bible. He ought to be a guy who studies doctrine. He ought to be a guy that helps make leadership decisions. But he ought not think he's God's great gift to the whole church.

Deacons ought never run a church. It ought to be people working together to get something done for Jesus. That's God's way. Some mutual accountability. Some mutual accountability. And I should be able to be held accountable by the men of this church, principally deacons that we're putting in place.

Second thing I'd like to show you. There ought to be very little difference between a bishop, a pastor, an elder, a deacon, or even a regular member in our church.

There should be very little difference. We all ought to be God's people. We are God's people. And every one of us should be able to seek. We should be seeking to live at the highest level of love for Jesus that there is.

It ought not be like, well, the preachers, they really need to be good guys. And the deacons, they've got to be kind of good guys. And the rest of us can be just plain old demons.

[14 : 00] That's just not the biblical way of looking at it. Here's some words that you might not hear often. But because we are appointing two more men as deacons, I want to just bring these to you.

You ought to write them down somewhere. Number one, write down this. We believe as Baptists that the Bible clearly teaches priesthood of the believer. I could show you that all through the Bible.

I just don't have time tonight because we've got two or three more things we're going to do. But do you understand that means I don't have any special access card. I have not got a VIP card that gets me into the Delta Sky Lounge of heaven where God says general people outside and real big shots come on inside.

That's not how it works. It's the priesthood of the believer. God loves you. You're his. And you belong to him. And all of us go to him. And you don't have to come to me and ask me to pray for you.

I'm glad to pray for you. But you ought to ask me to pray for you like you ask everybody else to pray for you. Because we all are priests. We all have access. And by the way, no one talks to our father without going through a priest.

[15 : 05] And there is a high priest. And his name is Jesus. So we believe that in our church it's not like there's one really great guy here. Maybe two or three others that we've got on staff are really great guys.

Or maybe these deacons are really great guys. But instead we believe every Christian, every born again believer, that veil in the temple was torn from the top to the bottom.

And the way was open and all of us can get to our father. By the way, he wants to hear from you. You are a priest. First, you're a king and you're a priest and you have equal access.

Second thing we believe in is called individual soul liberty. If you've ever studied any Baptist course, you'd know this. And you know what individual soul liberty means? You can be wrong if you want to be. That's what it means.

And I can be wrong if I want to be. And we don't have to agree on everything. There's not one person who dictates from heaven what is to be believed except this. We're to obey the word of God.

[16 : 01] But you know what? We're even going to have some differences in opinion on some of the things out of the word of God. We're going to read the Bible and we're going to say, I'm not sure what that means. And I don't have a right to say to you, well, you've got to believe what I believe.

That's why as Baptists, we've never wanted to have a state church. We've never wanted to have a church that dictated what everybody did. We believe. You can believe. If you want to build a Muslim mosque, whatever you call them, mosque.

Sorry about that. Boy, I am bad tonight. A Muslim mosque next to our church. They have every right. Because they can believe that if they want to. And we won't stop them from believing it except by trying to show them the truth.

Because we believe they have that right to do that. It's called individual soul liberty. I hope vision always stands for strong laymen. That's not always easy as a pastor.

It's far easier when you're the missionary on the mission field and everybody knows you got the money. And they're all like, man, he's the man I got around here. That part's probably been one of the hardest things for me to adapt to living back in America.

[17 : 06] But I want you to know that it's always true that God wants it to be your church. Belongs to him. But you're owners. You're not renters. You're owners.

You're not renters. I remember the first time I wanted to get to baby and I got married. I wanted to get my own prescription. Subscription. To the newspaper. You know, they wouldn't let me. They wouldn't send me the newspaper because I was a renter.

And they said, you have to come down and pay a month in advance because we don't trust people who rent. And so we won't give you the newspaper. They'd only known the internet was coming and we wouldn't trust them either.

But anyway, you are not a renter. This is your church. And I hope the laymen of this church understand that. And let me just say this because there's so many mysteries always here.

There ought never be an inferiority complex at vision. You ought not have. Well, Austin's a pastor and Robert and Trent and Jeff. They're pastors and missionaries. We've got all these missionaries. I'm just a regular layman.

[18 : 02] Oh, no. You're a child of the king of heaven. You're a blood-washed saint. And there's no such thing as any kind of rank. God never looks down on us and says, I got a bunch of people in that room.

I really like the preacher. He's a good guy. A little bit on the heavy side, but I like him. And the assistant pastors, they're really good guys too. And the missionaries, they're good. The church members will put up with them. That's not the way God ever looks at us.

Never in his life. Never in his life. And his life is forever. Has he ever thought like that? So we shouldn't do that. Who are these men? And who are the deacons? Just real quickly.

Who are they? Number one, biblically, they are men who have proven themselves. And I personally would not want these men to be deacons if I didn't believe these things to be true.

Nor would the other men that are deacons or the staff that have agreed with me about asking them. Nor would the men of our church who have voted on them. But the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3.10, let them first be proved.

[18 : 59] Let them first be proved. Underline that. These are people we know. These are people we've watched. These are people that love the Lord Jesus.

These are people that have a strong family life. These are people that love vision as a church. These are people that have a testimony of being respected and followed by the membership of our church of vision.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11.1, Paul said, be ye followers of me. And every one of these men, I believe, are men that we could say as a church, they should be followed.

I mean, they're perfect. It doesn't mean they're perfect. But it means their hearts after Jesus. And they're seeking him and they want to follow him. Second thing I'd like to show you is there are men who lead their families well.

In 1 Timothy 3.12, the Bible says, let the deacons be husbands of one wife and rule their own children and their own houses well. These men deeply love their wives.

[19 : 58] I've seen that. I think you've seen that. They use their influence to train their children to love Jesus. I think we've all seen that. They share the gospel with their children and with their grandchildren, some of them.

Jeff Mize hasn't done a very good job. But he can't wait. He's pretty excited about a first grandchild. These are men of high spiritual caliber.

1 Timothy 3.13, the Bible said, For they that have used the office of a deacon will purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

High spiritual caliber. These are men who are always going to be trying to improve their ministry and their service. In Philippians 3.13, the apostle Paul never thought he arrived.

None of us are ever going to be good enough. I want to be a better preacher. I want to be a better husband. I want to be a better dad. I want to be a better Christian. I want to learn how to respond better to things that happen in my life.

[21 : 00] And that's what Paul said in Philippians 3.13. He said, Brethren, I don't think I've arrived. I count not myself to have apprehended. But this one thing I do, I forget everything that's behind me and I keep stretching.

I keep stretching. I keep reaching out to do more for Jesus. Verse 14, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. He said, So let's all be perfect or mature.

In verse 15. And all of y'all be of the same opinion. Let's walk of that same rule. So let's go forward for Jesus. So here's some things I'd like to ask you tonight.

As the pastor of Vision Baptist Church, I'd like to ask you to love these men. I'd like to ask you to love these men and love their ministries. I'd like to ask you to pray for them that God will use them to his honor and his glory.

As a church, we're saying that Jeff Mize and Ty Pepperdine are men like we've looked at in the scripture. And I'm asking you to love them and I'm asking you to pray for them.

[21 : 59] I'm asking you to make it your personal goal that you one day would live up if you're not already and you may be. You'd live up to the same honor. You know, not everybody's going to end up being a deacon probably.

We'll probably have a lot of them maybe. The whole point is we all ought to be trying to say, Man, I want my life to count as much as any deacons ever counted. I want mine to count as much as any pastors ever counted. I want you to feel free to talk to these men about your spiritual needs and things in our church.

As you guys, you're in the church. I know that Austin's out of town. I know that Austin's traveling and I know you probably perceived me to be busier than I am. But I want you to know there are five men as of tonight that are available for you.

There are also four of us, there are five of us that work on church staff here that I'd like to ask you. You can talk to these men. I'm not the jealous kind. I am the jealous kind. I shouldn't say that I do get jealous. I shouldn't get jealous.

And I'll always work on not being jealous. And I'll always try to have the right kind of spirit about that. So talk to these men. Help them accomplish the work that they'll have in the church. As these deacons, little by little, they'll do more and more ministry in our church.

[23 : 08] They'll be doing things in our church. They're almost, I mean, they're basically like church staff. So pray for them that God will use them in the jobs that they have. I'd like to ask you to love our pastoral staff.

I'd like to ask you to never forget Trent and Robert and Jeff and Jimmy. Jimmy's upstairs and you won't know him well, but being an assistant pastor is like the worst job in the world.

Because you're not the guy up in front. And I hope you guys will love them and take better care of them than you do me. I would like to ask you to love each other as a church body. That's a biblical thing that we would love each other.

That we would work on being a church that loves each other. The thing that most would tell the world that we are his disciples would be that we love one another. That's what the scripture says. I would like to ask you to not expect these men to be perfect.

I can tell you now that none of us, including you, are all we ought to be. And so the guys that are deacons in our church won't be perfect either.

[24 : 07] The staff won't be perfect. Don't expect them to be perfect, but pray for them. Remember that this church is a place of grace and love for these men and for everybody else.

We want to be the church when you come in here and you're hurting. There's a whole bunch of people that says, hey, that's all right. We're here for you. Get on here. Our Lord's for you, so we're for you. That's who we want to be.

And then we will all work at growing together for the honor and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's our whole purpose. Till Jesus comes back. That's what I'd like to ask you to do tonight. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia.

For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com, where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.