

RESTORING LEADERSHIP: DEACONS

1 Timothy 3:8-13

There are only two official positions in the New Testament, the office of elder and the office of deacon. In our last study, we looked at the role of the elder, and in this study, we will see how important the role of the deacon is as they take care of the physical needs of the local church, and how it complements the role of the elders.

THE ROLE OF A DEACON

In order to rightly understand the service the deacons provided, we need to look at when the first deacons were selected in Acts 6:1-6. In this passage, there are two things I want us to notice. First is what these men were selected to do and why. Generally speaking, these men were selected to deal with certain physical needs that were arising in this new church family. This first church embraced a deep level of responsibility toward one another and that meant making sure that those with little material resources were taken care of, particularly widows in this case. As the church grew, so did the needs and so did the “discussions” about these needs and how they were being met. These complaints were being brought to the apostles to be handled, however, the apostles realized that if they were to take on these issues, it would directly impact their availability to be in prayer and the ministry of teaching the word. So they selected the first deacons to be in charge of meeting the physical needs of the church family. *The leadership of the deacons would allow the apostles to devote themselves to prayer and preaching.*

The second thing to notice is that at that first selection, there were specific qualifications given that the deacons needed to meet. The men selected needed to be “*men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom*”. This parallels our passage today as Paul relates more specific qualifications to Timothy.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS- 1 TIMOTHY 3:8-12

Similar to the office of the elder, the office of the deacon should only be occupied by men who live up to certain standards. This is once again to help protect the church from poor leadership, and also to protect her reputation among outsiders. How the church handles the physical needs of its family can be a wonderful ministry within the church, as well as a powerful testimony to the outside community.

Most of these qualifications are straightforward and do not need much explanation. However, holding to the “mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” might make us scratch our heads a bit. It is helpful to note that “the faith” refers to a body of beliefs or truths, not one specific claim to be believed. It is the sum-total of what God had revealed to these believers regarding Jesus Christ. Paul had spent three years teaching in Ephesus prior to this letter, so we would be safe to assume that there was a solid curriculum for them to study and understand. It seems like Paul also gives us a bit of a summary of the truths to be held onto in 2:4-7. The word

“mystery” is referring to something that was previously unknown or hidden but has now been revealed. This seems to be directly related to the revealed truths about Jesus as seen above. There also is an additional address directed toward the wives of deacons, which there is not for the wives of elders. We can understand this when we consider the important role that a deacon’s wife would have in ministry with him. Dealing with the physical needs, particularly of single women within the church, would be a task best served by a qualified husband-wife team.

INCENTIVES FOR SERVICE- 1 TIMOTHY 3:13

Paul bookends this discussion about elders and deacons by laying out some incentives to help motivate and encourage the brothers in Ephesus, and we will find these are just as helpful to us today. In 3:1 Paul encouraged the men of Ephesus to pursue eldership by stating that it was a “noble task”. As he closes out this section dealing with deacons he gives two incentives. Those who serve well as deacons by helping to meet the physical needs of the church family and enabling the elders to spend their time in the ministry of the word and prayer, gain “good standing” and “great confidence in the faith...”. Good standing in that they will rightly be honored by outsiders, fellow believers, and ultimately by God for the faithful exercise of their office. Great confidence in their faith will be the result of their faithful service to the children of God and seeing the fruit of God’s provision right in front of their eyes.

GRACE NEWS AND NEEDS

- Elder Candidate Evaluations on behalf of Eric Benson and Nick Lowther.

Evaluation forms are available in the foyer and online. Please return by Sunday, March 2nd.

- Membership Class, Today, 10:00 AM in the Modular. No registration is needed, come in and see what membership is all about.

- Women’s Salad Social, Saturday, March 25th, 1:00PM

Free! Sign up on the patio and bring a salad to share.

- Men’s Breakfast, Saturday, March 25th, 7:30AM

\$10, signup on the patio.

- VOM Needs for March: 1) Bath Towels 2) Floss 3) Combs