

Six Characteristics of a Healthy Church: 03 Order

Introduction

We are in the midst of a study of the book of 1 Timothy. The Apostle Paul wrote an urgent letter to Timothy to get the church back in order. There were six main areas that Paul addressed in his letter. I have entitled this series Six Characteristics of a Healthy Church.

(1 Timothy 3:14-15) "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; {15} but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

In the first week, we covered Sound Doctrine. Sound doctrine is vital to our faith. Bad doctrine brings people into bondage; sound doctrine sets people free. Poor doctrine tears down, while good doctrine builds people up. Poor doctrine causes disharmony, while sound doctrine promotes peace and harmony. Poor doctrine focuses on controversial issues, while sound doctrine focuses on Christ.

Six Characteristics of a Healthy Church

September 9, 2012 Healthy Church # 1: Sound Doctrine

September 16, 2012 Healthy Church # 2: Prayer (1 Tim 2)

September 23, 2012 Healthy Church # 3: Order Part 1 (Elders, 1 Tim 3:1-7)

September 30, 2012 Healthy Church # 3: Order Part 2 Service (Deacons, 1 Tim 3:8-12)

October 14, 2012 Healthy Church # 4: Godliness

October 21, 2012 Healthy Church # 5: Honor (1 Tim 5-6)

October 28, 2012 Health Church # 6: Focus on God

The second characteristic was prayer. Paul exhorted the church to pray. He exhorted them to pray with entreaties, prayers, petitions or intercessions, and thanksgivings. The third characteristic of a healthy church is order. Last week, we looked at five reasons for naming this chapter order. We saw that God is a God of order. Proper order in the church involves setting in elders in the church. Elders are needed to oversee the services. Elders are needed to manage the affairs of the church. Deacons are needed to manage the different ministries in the church and to free up the apostles and elders. The last bit of order is having every member serving in an area of service that they have been called and equipped to serve in. It is the elders' responsibility to help members come under proper order and arrangement.

This week we are looking at the second message on order, the qualifications of deacons. I have given several messages on deacons over the past couple of years. Some of this will be a review of what we have already learned. Even though we have learned about it, we have not laid hands on anyone and put them in the office of deacon. As a church plant, we are still in process.

Next week, John Dean will be ministering to our body. We will take a one-week break from our series. John is the Founder of Alliance International Ministries (AIM). My understanding is that there are about three million people in AIM. John and I have been friends for about twenty-five years. He has been a spiritual father in my life. He has ministered in every church that I have been privileged to lead. John is an apostle and oversees many churches around the world. I maintain my ministry ordination papers with AIM and maintain relationship and accountability with John. John not only ministers apostolically, but he has a powerful prophetic ministry. It is our prayer that the Lord will use John mightily to encourage our body through prophetic ministry while he is here.

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In two more weeks, Tony Vaughn will be preaching on the fourth characteristic of a healthy church, godliness. Tony will be preaching on disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness. Sound doctrine is to promote godliness. The qualifications for elders and deacons is godly character. Godliness is a theme throughout the book of Timothy. The fifth characteristic is honoring one another. The last characteristic is having proper focus in our lives. We must fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

In this message I would like to give a short history of the office of deacon, define the office of deacon, hopefully clearing up some confusion about the office, and then go through the qualifications of a deacon. Since some of this has already been covered in the Ministry Series that I taught last summer, I will move rather quickly through those parts that we are reviewing.

1. History of the Office of Deacon

The history of the office of deacon is sketchy, and definitely open for discussion. I want to take just a few minutes to discuss what we can see. If we look at the books of the New Testament in a chronological order, the first mention of a deacon is in the book of Romans, which was written around 58 AD. The deacon or deaconess that is mentioned is a woman named Phoebe. I do not believe she was the first deacon or deaconess, but this is the earliest manuscript with a deacon or deaconess mentioned.

(Romans 16:1-2) "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant (diakonos) of the church which is at Cenchrea; {2} that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well."

The next time that the office of deacon is mentioned is in the book of Philippians, which was written about 62 AD. In this letter, Paul addresses the church in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.

(Philippians 1:1) "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons (diakonos):"

I believe that the office of deacon was established long before these two references, but that is my opinion. I believe that the first deacons were put into office in Acts 6. Many theologians agree with this, but there are some, like John MacArthur, who do not hold this position. The book of Acts was written in either 61 or 62 AD. The things that happened in Acts did not take place in 61 or 62 AD; the book was just written by Luke at that time. We find in Acts 1 that Luke compiled an account of the things accomplished by the apostles. Luke investigated things carefully and wrote out the events in consecutive order, starting at the time Christ met with the believers and then ascended to heaven.

(Luke 1:1-3) "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, {2} just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, {3} it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;"

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In Acts 6, there was a growing complaint that some of the Greek widows were being overlooked in the serving of food. The church had a benevolent ministry and took care of widows. The apostles were wearing themselves out serving spiritual meals and physical meals. And, the job was not being done with a spirit of excellence, resulting in a complaint. The twelve apostles gathered the congregation and communicated the problem to them. Like good leaders, they had given some forethought and also gave them a solution. They said, it is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, select seven men from among you that we can put in charge of this task. And, the apostles gave some qualifications for the church to use in selecting these seven men. Even though these men were not given the title of diaconos, most theologians believe these were the first deacons. I will address that in just a minute under the definition of deacon.

(Acts 6:1-6) "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. {2} And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. {3} "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. {4} "But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." {5} And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. {6} And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them."

On a historical time line, Christ is thought to have died in 30 AD. Most church historians place the salvation of Paul around 37 AD. There are historical records that date the stoning of Stephen and the first great persecution of the church around 34 AD. (Not all historians agree on this date.) The choosing of these deacons in Acts 6 took place before the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. Paul was a young man that kept peoples' garments at the stoning of Stephen, who was one of the men that was chosen as a deacon in this passage. This means that there were deacons in the church sometime between 30 AD and 34 AD. There was explosive growth in the church right after Pentecost. I believe the church grew to be at least 50,000 people. The fact that they needed seven people to attend to the widows also suggests that the church was very large. This places the first deacons in the church at least 24 years, and possibly up to 28 years prior to the mention of Phoebe.

(Acts 7:58-8:3) "And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. {59} And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" {60} And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep. {8:1} And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. {2} And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. {3} But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

In this account in Acts that Luke gives us, the first deacons were put into office out of a need in the body. I believe that this is significant. Deacons are not there for the sake of position. Deacons are

there for a specific need. Many times the church gets caught up in positions, rather than function. I cast my vote on function, not titles or positions.

In this account, we also learn how the first deacons were put into office. The apostles told the church to select seven men of good character and reputation. Therefore, the congregation brought forth seven men and put them before the apostles. The apostles prayed, and then they laid hands on them and set them into office. The result was that the word of God kept on spreading, and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem. One of the best ways to judge a matter is by the fruit. The selection of these deacons, and the work performed by these deacons bore good fruit.

(Acts 6:6-7) "And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. {7} And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."

One final word regarding the history of deacons. The first deacons were male. Somewhere between 30 AD and 58 AD, when Phoebe is mentioned, women were included in the office of deacon. It was probably a process to get women accepted in a leadership role in the New Testament, just as it is still a process to get women accepted today. There are still many churches that do not allow women in any kind of leadership role. For more information about women in ministry, let me encourage you to order the message entitled the "Women's Hundred Meter Hurdle."

2. Defining the Office of Deacon

In our text today, the word for deacon is diakonos. This means a servant, attendant, minister, or deacon. It probably comes from diako, which means to run on errands, or to wait tables. It is commonly translated as servant, and is only translated as deacon when referring to the office of deacon. The Greek word diakonos is used thirty times in Scripture, and I believe that it is speaking about a person in the office of deacon or the position of deacon in only four of those instances. Most of the cases, it is being used to speak about being a servant, not the office of servant.

(1 Timothy 3:8) "Deacons (diakonos) likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,"

G1249. diakonos; probably from an obscure diako (to run on errands; comp. G1377); an attendant, i.e. (gen.) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); (technically a deacon or deaconess):--deacon, minister, servant.

The word deacon is a transliteration. What that means is that the translators simply made up an English word out of the Greek word, rather than simply translating the word. The dictionary defines transliterate this way: to change (letters, words, etc.) into corresponding characters of another alphabet or language: to transliterate the Greek letter x as ch. If the various translators had just translated diakonos, we would not have the word deacon. They would have generally used the word servant.

There are a number of transliterations that we use frequently. The word angel is another of those transliterations. Angel means messenger. Sometimes in Scripture, the Greek word aggelos refers to

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a heavenly being, i.e. an angel. Sometimes the word angel refers to a messenger. When John has a prophetic word for the seven churches in Revelations, most scholars believe that he was addressing the Senior Pastor, the main spokesperson, or messenger for each of the churches.

There are other words that are transliterated. For example, bapto is translated as baptism. Bapto means to immerse or dip. It was used in the clothing industry at the time. People would bapto or immerse their fabrics into a dye. They would make sure that the fabric was fully immersed and soaked so that there was a consistency in the dye. When the early church baptized new converts, they were immersed in water. They chose places where there was much water so that they could immerse the converts. Because of the transliteration, there is confusion about the practice of baptism. Many churches sprinkle believers rather than immerse. If the word had been translated instead of transliterated, there would have been less confusion about the doctrine of baptism.

In the same way, there is much confusion about deacons because of the transliteration. Some churches have confused the method or process of ordaining elders with the process of appointing deacons in the church. Throughout the New Testament, leaders are referred to as diakonos or servants. For example, in Romans 15:8, and Galatians 2:17, Christ is called a diakonos or servant. Sometimes diakonos refers to being a servant and sometimes it refers to the office of servant or deacon.

Christ – (Romans 15:8) "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,"

Christ – (Galatians 2:17) ""But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!"

Apollos and Paul were called servants or diakonos in 1 Corinthians 3:5. Neither Paul nor Apollos were deacons in the church. They were apostles in the church. But according to Christ's instructions, all leaders are to be servants or diakonos in the church. Jesus taught and modeled servant leadership.

(1 Corinthians 3:5) "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one."

Paul was called a minister in Ephesians 3:7, Colossians 1:23, and Colossians 1:25. Because he was called a minister, many churches have the deacons as the rulers in the church. In many Baptist churches, it is the deacons who run the church. It is the overseers or elders who govern and manage the household of God, not the deacons. Some Baptist churches have recognized this misunderstanding and have moved towards elder-led churches. All this confusion has come out of the translation of diakonos.

(Ephesians 3:7) "of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power."

(Colossians 1:23) "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister."

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(Colossians 1:25) "Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,"

It is clear in Philippians that the word diakonos is referring to the office of deacon or office of servant. The deacons are mentioned in conjunction with the overseers. Paul greets the church, and those in the office of overseer over the church, and those officially serving in the office of servant or deacons.

(Philippians 1:1) "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (episkopos) and deacons (diakonos):"

Another confusion over the terminology is the way deacons were set into office. The process in Acts 6 is different than the process for elders. Churches that have confused the terminology and believed that Paul and other ministers of the gospel were deacons, rather than servants of Christ, have chosen the selection process in Acts 6 for choosing pastors. Many congregations vote on their pastors. The Christian Church, for example, votes annually on their pastors, and the pastors need a 75% vote to remain in office. I believe it is the Holy Spirit that makes an overseer. I believe it is the apostles and the presbytery of elders that primarily recognize that call. I believe that there are five fingers that point to the calling, and one of these is the congregation. But, it is the apostles and other elders that make the final call, not the congregation. And, even in the selection process for deacons in Acts 6, the congregation put forth seven men, but the final determination was made by the apostles and elders of the church.

We do not know all the responsibilities that were given to the deacons. Again, this is very sketchy in Scripture. I believe we have lots of wiggle room in defining the responsibilities of deacons. I believe that it is up to the elders of the church to define the roles and responsibilities of the deacons.

As we look at areas in our church that need to be managed, we need to determine if this is an area that needs pastoral management or to be managed by deacons. When I look at Life Groups, the Life Group leader is clearly doing pastoral work. He is caring for souls. He is teaching, leading and caring for people. This is not deacon work; it is pastoral. If a person is leading a life group, is the person called to the office of overseer or is the person merely doing what all of us are called to do? These are important questions that have to be addressed. In my opinion, there should be a pastor over all the Life Groups. He/she should be meeting with the Life Group leaders and pastoring them. As the church grows and there are fifty Life Groups, we do not need fifty elders. By the way, some churches are being built on having an elder over each Life Group.

When I think of the sound team, it is a helps ministry. It does not require pastoral oversight. There are a lot of responsibilities to manage the sound team and sound system. This requires management, not just serving. Therefore, a deacon could be in charge of the sound team.

One of the clearest needs of a deacon or deaconess in the church is church administrator or church secretary. There is so much confidential information that passes through this person, that he or she needs to be a person of strong character. The person must be able to handle all the administrative tasks, but more importantly, the person needs to have maturity in his/her walk and a character that is above reproach. The church secretary or administrative assistant must meet the qualifications of a deacon or deaconess.

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Another clear area of deacon responsibility would be the facility. A deacon could easily make sure that the grounds are kept up. There are no teaching or pastoral skills required, just faithfulness.

The elders or overseers need to make decisions about the structure of the church, and which ministries need pastoral oversight, and which need to be managed by deacons. There are some areas that may require both. In the area of finances, the collection, counting, deposits, and tracking of finances can easily be done by someone in admin. However, the determination of how the funds are spent is governmental. The finances are to support the vision of the church. This lies in the responsibility of the elders. The elder in charge of the finances needs to work with all the other deacons, elders, and leaders in the church to determine what their needs are and to see to it that they have their needs included in the budget.

John MacArthur makes this distinction between the function of elders and deacons.

“His (elder) overall responsibility is in the ruling of the church through the authority of the understanding and proclamation of the Word of God. But right along side him come those who implement what he teaches, who implement the ministry and whose lives are no less godly than his.”

3. Qualifications for Deacons

Our text today is 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and there are two sets of qualifications given for deacons. There are qualifications for men, and a similar set of qualifications for women, which are given in verse 11. Let's read the passage.

(1 Timothy 3:8-13) "Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, {9} but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. {10} And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. {11} Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. {12} Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. {13} For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

Likewise

Paul begins by saying likewise. Just as there are qualifications for an elder, there are similar qualifications for deacons. The use of the word likewise suggests that this is a new group of leaders, that have a similar set of requirements. In verse 11, Paul uses the word likewise again, suggesting another new set of leaders with similar requirements. There are some who believe that the word *gune* should be translated as wives, meaning the wives of deacons, but the use of the word *likewise* does not lend itself to that interpretation. Furthermore, since there are no requirements for the wives of elders, it would not make sense to have qualifications for the wives of deacons. The use of *likewise* suggests that these are female deacons.

(1 Tim 3:8) “Deacons likewise must be men of dignity...”

(1 Tim 3:11) "Women must likewise be dignified..."

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For me, the use of likewise not only suggests a new group that has similar qualifications, but it also implies that the qualifications are similar. We saw last week that there were two A's for an overseer. The first A was for Above Reproach. An elder needs to be above reproach in his character, in his family life, and with the outside world. The second A was for Ability. He had to have the ability to manage, and he had to be apt to teach.

When we look at this passage on deacons, verse ten says, "let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach." Just as elders need to be above reproach, deacons also need to be above or beyond reproach. Similarly, just as elders need to be above reproach in their character and in their family, we see that deacons need to be above reproach in their character and in their family.

(1 Timothy 3:10) "And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach."

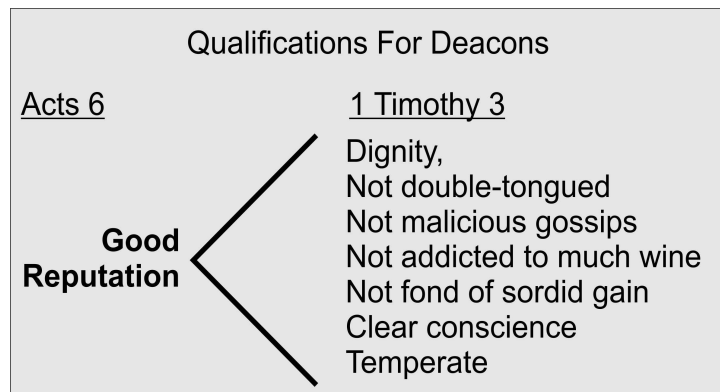
In verse eleven, Paul shifts to female deacons. He gives four different requirements and they all have to do with being above reproach in character.

(1 Timothy 3:11) "Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things."

So, the main requirement for both elders and deacons is to be above reproach. In the ministry series that we did last year, I used the text in Acts 6 to give the qualifications of a deacon. There were basically three qualifications given in that passage. First, the person had to have a good reputation. Second, the person needed to be full of the Spirit. Third, the person needed to possess wisdom.

(Acts 6:3) ""But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."

The good reputation that Luke records is just another way of saying that the deacon must be above reproach. I had put together a graphic for you that showed how Paul really took the good reputation and broke it down for us. He shows us in 1 Timothy 3 what it means to have a good reputation, or to be above reproach.



The leaders in the church, whether deacons or elders, need to be above reproach. Both elders and deacons are to be examples to the flock. The deacons do not have a lower standard than elders. They function differently, but the character requirement to be an elder is no different than the character requirement to be a deacon. Both are to be above or beyond reproach. Both are to have a good reputation.

Because our passage is partitioned by the uses of likewise, I will also break it down by the use of likewise. We will look at the qualifications of male deacons, and then we will look at the qualifications of female deacons. Then, we will look at the promise made to deacons that serve well.

Male Deacons – Above Reproach in Character

Dignity (Semnos)

Paul begins by saying that deacons must be men of dignity. A person who has a good reputation will be a man of dignity. The word for dignity is semnos, which means venerable, honorable, grave, honest or dignity. The word venerable means to command respect because of great age or dignity. It means to command reverence because of high office or noble character.

G4586. semnos, sem-nos'; from G4576; venerable, i.e. honorable:--grave, honest.

Venerable: commanding respect because of great age or impressive dignity; worthy of veneration or reverence, as because of high office or noble character:

The root word of semnos is sebomai, which means to revere or adore. This is speaking about a very serious and devout individual whose life inspires others. This is a person who is worthy of respect because their character is beyond reproach.

G4576. sebomai, seb'-om-ahee; mid. of an apparent primary verb; to revere, i.e. adore:--devout, religious, worship.

Not double-tongued

Paul then gives three negatives. He says that deacons must not be double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, and not fond of sordid gain. Double-tongued means that this person is not telling one group one thing and another group something else. Politicians are notorious for being double-tongued. When a politician is in Pennsylvania, he tells those voters one thing. And then, when the politician is speaking to California voters, he says something different. A person who is not double-tongued will not be telling a different story to different people. Politicians are not getting away with this as much as in previous years, because the media is holding them more accountable for their words.

(1 Timothy 3:8) "Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain."

Not addicted to much wine

The second negative is that a deacon cannot be addicted to much wine. The way that this reads in the Greek is that a deacon does not pay much attention to wine (prosecho polus oinos). Prosecho means to hold the mind or pay attention to.

G4337. prosecho, pros-ekh'-o; from G4314 and G2192; (fig.) to hold the mind (G3563 impl.) towards, i.e. pay attention to, be cautious about, apply oneself to, adhere to:--(give) attend (-ance, -ance at, -ance to, unto), beware, be given to, give (take) heed (to, unto) have regard.

We saw last week that an elder was not to be addicted to much wine. I gave you some verses about the proper use of wine. It has medicinal value. Liquor also has compassionate value. But, I also gave

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you some warnings about wine. Bathsheba told Solomon that it was not for kings to drink wine, lest they forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of the poor. Proverbs gives us several passages about alcoholic consumption. In Proverbs 23, he talks about the woes, sorrows, contentions, and complaining of alcoholics. He talks about those who linger long over wine. He says to not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup... A deacon is one that does not pay attention or set his mind on wine.

(Proverbs 23:29-35) "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? {30} Those who linger long over wine, Those who go to taste mixed wine. {31} Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it goes down smoothly; {32} At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. {33} Your eyes will see strange things, And your mind will utter perverse things. {34} And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, Or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. {35} "They struck me, but I did not become ill; They beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.""

When I was in first through fourth grade, we lived in a place called Agha Jari, Iran. It is supposed to be the hottest place on earth, and I believe it. It was a small oil town at that time and there were expatriates from all over the world. In my class, we had British, Scottish, Dutch, Canadian, French, and Americans. They did not have a cafeteria at our school. Each of us brought our own lunch box and something to drink. Agha Jari had the worst water that I have ever tasted. We boiled the water and then put it through a filter. Even after doing those things, the water was still very salty. It was literally the worst tasting water that I have ever had. I loved it when we got to London or Amsterdam on our way back to the USA because they had clean tasting water. It was refreshing and did not have a taste to it.

My parents sent me to school with this nasty-tasting filtered water in my flask. But the French kids in my class did not have water in their flasks. These kindergartners and first graders had wine in their flasks. It was their culture to drink wine, even as children. They did not think anything about it.

In the New Testament culture, wine drinking was similar to Europe. People thought nothing about drinking wine; it was part of their everyday lifestyle. It was also part of their festive occasions. If you remember, Jesus' first public miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding. Drinking wine was not a big deal. The requirement for both elders and deacons is not to look on the wine. It is not to set our minds on wine. It is not to be addicted to much wine. Leadership needs to be very temperate and self-controlled in their use of wine.

Not fond of sordid gain

The third negative that Paul uses is not fond of sordid gain. The King James Version says not greedy of filthy lucre. It was very important for church leadership to be free from greed or have a love of money. The world has this perception that ministers are in it for the money. When I planted this church, a family member of one of the members of our congregation told them not to tithe, that the pastor was probably using the money for himself, not the church plant. That member told her son that I was not even taking salary, which is true. I have never been given a salary or honorarium. I am not pastoring for the money. God is currently meeting my needs through my other job.

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(1 Timothy 3:8 KJV) "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;"

Here is a few words about the use of money. We see in the early church that the tithes and offerings were given to the apostles and elders. They determined the use of those funds. Many times, those funds were distributed to the poor, needy, orphans, and widows. They were distributed by the elders and deacons. They did not write a check to these people. They gave cash. They carried cash in their money bags. It would have been easy to do what Judas Iscariot did, and help themselves to money in the bag. An elder and a deacon need to be faithful and trustworthy in the use of money.

I believe in financial responsibility and transparency. I used to give regular updates on our church finances. This year, I counseled many times that we need to give financial reports to the congregation. I was not receiving financial information, and neither was the rest of the congregation. We will be giving out financial reports once again. It is very important to have financial transparency.

Karen and I are going to the Vineyard conference next month in Phoenix. I will be there October 18-20. The new National Director for the Vineyard will be speaking, Phil Strout, and I want to hear him. The Vineyard strongly encourages the leadership to attend these "family gatherings." They also encourage members from congregations to go. Many of you went last year to the conference. It is also customary for churches to pay for their pastors to attend these meetings. Rather than assume this right, I approached our leadership team and asked them if we could use the church funds to pay for our trip to Phoenix. By the way, they gave their full support for that use of funds. We are committed to financial accountability and transparency.

Clear Conscience

Next, Paul says that deacons must hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. I will be preaching a message on a clear conscience out of 1 Timothy 1:5 later this year. Paul said that the goal of their, meaning Paul and Timothy, instruction was love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Some of the men who were teaching bad doctrine did not have pure motives and goals. Having a clear conscience is really important in our faith.

(1 Timothy 3:9) "but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

Paul exhorted Timothy to fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience. He went on to say that some people rejected a good conscience and have suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

(1 Timothy 1:18-19) "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, {19} keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith."

A deacon must be one that holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. This is a person whose conscience is not accusing him, or bringing guilt to him. A seared conscience is one that does not convict the person of wrong doing any more. His conscience has become callous because he has disregarded it for so long. It no longer bothers him to sin.

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Keeping the faith with a clear conscience tells me the person is responsive to his conscience. It means that the person has a soft and contrite heart. It means the person is free from the knowledge of any sin in his life. Notice how Paul talks about his conscience in 2 Corinthians 1:12. He said that in holiness and godly sincerity he has maintained the testimony of his conscience. His conscience was testifying of how they had conducted themselves in the world and towards the Corinthian church. A clear conscience and a holy lifestyle go hand in hand.

(2 Corinthians 1:12) "For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you."

Tested (faithful)

Next, Paul says that a deacon should first be tested. If they are found to be above reproach, or faithful, then they can serve as deacons. All of us are tested. Every day is a test in our lives to see if we are going to choose to do what is right.

(1 Timothy 3:10) "And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach."

The word for tested is dokimazo, which means to test, approve, discern, examine, or prove. If we were looking at a yellow rock to determine if it was gold or iron pyrite, known as fool's gold, we would examine it and test it.

G1381. dokimazo, dok-im-ad'-zo; from G1384; to test (lit. or fig.); by impl. to approve:--allow, discern, examine, X like, (ap-) prove, try.

- Real gold is shiny, not glittery. Iron pyrite has a crystalline structure and is glittery.
- Real gold is soft. Iron pyrite is hard and brittle. Many gold panners would test their finds by biting it with their teeth. If the rock broke off, they knew it was not gold. If they were able to put an indentation in it, then it was real gold.
- Real gold is heavy. A large piece of gold is much heavier than a piece of iron pyrite.
- Real gold is cleansed, but not otherwise affected by nitric acid. Other yellow metals are affected by nitric acid. Iron pyrite is also not affected by nitric acid, so the hardness test is what is used to test or prove whether it is gold or iron pyrite.

Just as we can test gold, our faith can be tested. In a familiar passage, Paul tells us not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we can prove (dokimazo) what the will of God is, that which is good, acceptable and perfect. As you and I go through different things in our lives, we are constantly tested. Are we going to do what is good, or are we going to respond in a wrong way? Are we going to do what is acceptable, or are we going to do something that is not acceptable? Are we going to do that which is perfect or mature? Are we going to handle a situation in a mature way, or act immaturely. Each of us are tested daily.

(Romans 12:2) "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

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Solomon tells us that the crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man is tested by the praise accorded or given to him. When someone tells me that it was a good message, that is a test. Am I going to respond humbly? Am I going to say thank you and return thanks to the Holy Spirit who has been pouring things out to me? Or, am I going to get proud and cocky. We are tested by the praise given to us. That is just one way we are tested.

(Proverbs 27:21) "The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, And a man is tested by the praise accorded him."

Peter says that our faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, is tested by fire. A fire suggests some heated situations. A fire suggests some difficult and trying circumstances. A fiery test may include losing a job. A fiery test may be a false charge or accusation against you. A fiery test may be a difficult relationship at work or at home. Yesterday, at the Men's Bible study, Ray Arambula read about a man named Pairote, who was beaten and persecuted for his faith in China. Like the apostles in the early church, he rejoiced that he was counted worthy of suffering for the gospel. It was a fiery test that he passed with flying colors. A fiery test could be a number of different things. We are all being tested to see if our faith is going to result in praise, glory, and honor.

(1 Peter 1:7) "that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

In the context of the passage, I believe that a deacon should also be faithful in carrying out areas of responsibility. Jesus said that "he who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much." A deacon should be faithful in small areas of responsibility before being raised up as a deacon.

(Luke 16:10) ""He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."

Male Deacons - Above Reproach in Family

Next, Paul says that deacons should be husbands of only one wife. Polygamy was not an issue in that day. Most theologians are in agreement that this is not talking about divorce and remarriage. Most theologians see this a man who is a one-woman man. He has eyes on his wife. He is committed to his wife. His heart and his life are totally devoted to the woman who is his wife. He is morally faithful to his wife.

(1 Timothy 3:12) "Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households."

Last, Paul says that a deacon should be a good manager of his children and his household. The word manage in Greek is *proistemi*, which is the same word used for elders, who are charged with managing or ruling the household of God. Again, the qualifications for being a deacon are essentially the same as an elder. The difference is that he is not required to be a man who is apt to teach. Although many deacons can teach, and teach very effectively, it is not a requirement. The requirement is that he rule over his family and his household. He must be a leader in his home.

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G4291. proistemi, pro-is'-tay-mee; from G4253 and G2476; to stand before, i.e. (in rank) to preside, or (by impl.) to practise:--maintain, be over, rule.

Female Deacons - Above Reproach in Character

Just as elders and male deacons must be above reproach, female deacons or deaconesses must also be above reproach. In verse eleven, Paul gives four qualifications. She is to have dignity. She is not to be a malicious gossip. She is to be temperate and faithful in all things.

(1 Timothy 3:11) "Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things."

The first requirement is the same as the first one given for male deacons. Her life must be honorable or venerable, one that deserves respect, awe, and praise. Her commitment to Christ is serious and her lifestyle reflects that serious commitment.

The second area is also similar to that given for male deacons. Deacons, whether male or female, must have control of their tongue. Paul says that men are not to be double-tongued. But, for women, he says that they are not to be malicious gossips. Both involve the tongue, but they are very different.

The Greek word that is used here is diabolos. It is used forty times in the New Testament, and the primary way it is translated is "devil." When Jesus is in the wilderness being tempted by the devil, the word is diabolos. All through that passage and the New Testament, the word for devil is diabolos. Diabolos means a false accuser, or slanderer. That is the nature of Satan. In Revelation, John calls Satan the accuser of the brethren.

G1228. diabolos, dee-ab'-ol-os; from G1225; a traducer; spec. Satan [comp. H7854]:--false accuser, devil, slanderer.

(Matthew 4:1) "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (diabolos)."

(Revelation 12:10) "And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night."

A slanderer is one that spreads a report about someone that makes the person look bad in the eyes of another person. The report may be true, but it causes the other person to think less of the person. All of us need to be very careful about the reports that we give of others.

An accuser of the brethren is slightly different. An accuser is attributing blame to other people for things that they may or may not have done. The things that they are accused of have not been proven. The accuser of the brethren does so to tear down people. Accusing one another of things does not build up or promote unity. Accusing one another and judging one another indicates pride.

There are times that we need to confront one another. Rather than accusing someone, we should

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come in a spirit of humility and inquisition. That means we should ask questions. We should find out more details before assuming the worst.

A while back I heard a preacher say something that raised a flag to me. I sent the man an email asking some questions about what I had heard. I did not accuse the man about lying to his congregation. I simply asked some questions about what I had heard and for more details about something that was shared. At times, we need to confront people. And when we do confront, we need to do it with humility and gentleness, and with a spirit of inquisition. Our purpose should be restoration, not to tear down. A gossip, slanderer, or accuser of the brethren does not do it to restore a person, to build up a person, or do it in humility and gentleness.

Deacons, whether male or female, should have control over their tongues. They should not be double-tongued or gossips.

Next, a female deacon should be temperate. We looked at the term *nephaleos* last week. It means to abstain from wine. A woman should be self-controlled. This should include wine, food, and other areas of her life. She is to be temperate in all things.

The last area mentioned is that a female deacon should be faithful in all things. Just as a male deacon should be tested and be found faithful, a female deacon should also be faithful in all things. She should be faithful in small matters. She should be faithful with the use of money. She should be faithful with what belongs to another person. She should be faithful in her walk with the Lord. She should be faithful in any and all responsibilities given to her.

Paul wrote to Timothy and told him to entrust the things he had learned from Paul to faithful men. The church is built by faithful people. In our second church plant we had a wonderful outreach to the government housing projects, and trailer parks. We ministered to the poor on a weekly basis. We prayed for people. We witnessed to people. We served people. But, I did not invest enough in faithful men. One of the lessons that the Lord really taught me about that church is the importance of investing in leaders. We should remember the poor, but we have to build on faithful people. A male or female deacon are part of the leadership of the church, and they need to be faithful people.

Results

Paul ends this passage with two promises for deacons. He says that those who have served well as deacons obtain or purchase for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

(1 Timothy 3:13) "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

The NASB says that deacons obtain a high standing. The KJV says that they purchase a good degree. I do not know that either of those really says what it needs to say. The Greek word is *bathmos*, which means a step. Another way of looking at the faithful service of a deacon is that this becomes a step towards something else that the Lord may have for them.

G898. *bathmos*, bath-mos'; from the same as G899; a step, i.e. (fig.) grade (of dignity):--degree.

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Some theologians say that a faithful deacon obtains a platform or pedestal. When we elevate ourselves, that is not a good thing. But, when we faithfully serve and God raises us up, that is a great thing. God honors and rewards faithful service. Leaders are supposed to be examples to the flock. A leader who has been put on a platform or pedestal can easily be seen by the flock.

The second thing that a faithful deacon obtains or purchases is great confidence or great boldness in the faith. In the book of Acts, after Peter and John had been released from the religious leaders and ordered not to preach in the name of Jesus, the disciples had a prayer meeting. They asked the Lord to grant them confidence, and to extend His hand to heal, and for signs and wonders to take place in the name of Jesus. Then, in verse thirty-one, after they had prayed, the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness. Notice that they asked to speak with confidence, and they were able to speak with boldness. We should pray the same prayer. But, we should also learn to serve faithfully, because there is a promise for us in this verse that when we have served faithfully, we obtain or purchase confidence and boldness in our lives.

(Acts 4:29-31) ""And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, {30} while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus." {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness."

Conclusion

Father God, we want our church to be in order. We want to be a church that preaches and teaches sound doctrine. We want to be a church that prays. As we go into prayer into a few minutes, lead us in our prayers. Make us to be a church that is committed to prayer. Fill us with confidence and boldness. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit. And Lord, help us to put in place the proper leadership in the church, both elders and deacons. Help us to recognize those who are called to the office of overseer. We believe in a plurality of elders. We believe in a diversity of giftings and callings. Help us to raise up deacons in the church. Help us to come into Your divine order for the church. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction (1 Tim 3:14-15,**1. History of the Office of Deacon** (Rom 16:1-2, Phil 1:1, Luke 1:1-3, Acts 6:1-6, Acts 7:58-8:3)

- The first _____ were added to the church between 30 AD and 58 AD.
- Deacons helped free up the apostles and elders to devote themselves to the ministry of the word and to _____.

2. Defining the Office of Deacon

- The English word deacon is a _____.
- The Greek word is _____ and it means a servant, attendant, minister, or deacon.
- Most references to diakonos refer to being a servant rather than the _____ of servant. (Rom 15:8, Gal 2:17, 1 Cor 3:5, Eph 3:7, Col 1:23, 1:25, Phi 1:1)
- Elders direct the affairs of the church and deacons _____ those decisions.

3. Qualifications for Deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13, Acts 6:3)

- The main requirement for both elders and deacons is to be _____.
- Deacons need to be men of _____ (semnos).
- Their behavior and life should bring _____.
- Deacons must not be double-tongued, which means to tell different _____ to different people.
- Deacons must not pay much _____ (prosecho, G4337) to wine. (Pr 23:29-35)
- Deacons must not be fond of sordid _____.
- Deacons must have a clear _____. (1 Tim 3:9, 2 Cor 1:12)
- A seared conscience can result in a _____. (1 Tim 1:18-19)
- Deacons should first be _____ (dokimazo, G1381). (1 Tim 3:10, Rom 12:2, Pr 27:21, 1 Pet 1:7, Luke 16:10)
- Deacons must also be above reproach in their _____. (1 Tim 3:12)
- Deacons must be good _____ (Proistemi, G4291).
- Female deacons (deaconesses) must also be _____. (1 Tim 3:11)
- Female deacons must also have dignity. They should also not be _____ (diabolos, G1228) (Matt 4:1, Rev 12:10)
- Female deacons should also be _____ (nephaleos), or self-controlled.
- Female deacons should also be _____ in all things.
- Deacons who serve well obtain a high _____ (or step) and great _____ or boldness. (1 Tim 3:13, Acts 4:29-31)

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