



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Serving the Lord's Church

January 12, 2020

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Clint Pressley

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

(Pastor prays)

By and large, the world has forgotten what real servant leadership looks like, and part of the redeeming call of the church is to raise up servant leaders who love Christ and will live like Christ. The office of deacon is as old as the church, and today we have the high honor of setting aside and ordaining several men to the office of deacon, men who have already displayed what it means to serve God and the Gospel in the context of the local church.

The office of deacon was born out of a need. In the book of Acts, as the church grew numerically, the needs of the congregation multiplied and expanded. Those demands threatened the Gospel message. Now this is important. The central purpose of any church is the Gospel of Jesus. That message is that God is the Holy Creator. Man is the image-bearer but a sinner. Jesus Christ, being fully God and fully man, born of a virgin, lived perfectly, died on the cross shedding His blood to purchase/redeem people. God raised Him from the dead and He has ascended into heaven, and any sinner who believes in the work of Christ will be saved. That is the Gospel message, and if the Gospel message gets lost in activity or loses its place of

centrality, then the church ceases to exist. And deacons are given to the church to serve God and the Gospel.

So today, we take a Sunday morning to explain why we have deacons and the Gospel standard they must live up to. Let's talk about the word "deacon" for a minute. Deacon comes from the Greek word *diakonos*. Its basic meaning is "to serve." The word *diakonos* appears about 100 times in the New Testament, but only here and in Philippians is the word *diakonos* translated as "deacon." We first see the word in Acts 6. It's translated as "waiting on tables," to do something mundane or humble work. But the word grew to include all manner of service in the church, to be versatile. Of the 100 times it's used in the New Testament, it's translated as "to administrate," "to care for," "to minister to," "servant," "to prepare," "to provide relief," "to support." In Romans 13:4, *diakonos* is used to talk about soldiers and policemen who enforce justice. Now, for our purposes today, we look at how deacons serve the church from what Paul wrote to Timothy because

A Gospel Church Has Gospel Servants

Let's look at the traits of a deacon in the text. They are aspirational and serious.

Serious

Deacons must be dignified. Dignified. The Greek word is *semnotés*, serious about Christ, the Gospel and serving the church, to feel the weight of responsibility and not to take serving God's church lightly. To do joyfully the necessary things and to do these for the sake of the cross, knowing that this world and the people in it will go to Hell if they remain in their sin, knowing that your character reflects this church and the Gospel.

Honest

Not "double-tongued.," a phrase found only here in the New Testament. You've known people like this. (It's) The idea of saying one thing to a person and something entirely different to someone else. It's integrity and consistent honesty, not duplicitous, not manipulative. Your Gospel message is only as strong as your life's integrity. Gospel honesty means being able to speak the truth but to do it with love, that your statement of faith matches your manner of life.

Disciplined

Not addicted to much wine. In a world of excess and hedonism, you are to stand as a Gospel sentry, a man capable of self-denial and a real example, a Gospel man who is not ruled by any passion but that of Christ, a Gospel man who is not drunk with wine but is filled with the Holy Spirit, living in such a way that I can tell any teenage boy to look at you and follow your Gospel example. That's the kind of man the church needs, a disciplined, humble man who wouldn't let any habit or desire get in the way of the Gospel. Gospel Sobriety.

Generous

Not greedy for dishonest gain. This carries the sense of being content with what God has provided and faithfully recognizing His provision by being radically generous instead of worrying about money, holding onto people tightly and things loosely, being willing to be wronged or shortchanged or even broke if it means Jesus Christ will be honored and exalted.

Theological

They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. This means you are captivated by the Gospel and your love for Christ never diminishes. The mystery of the faith. The revealed truth of Christ who died on the cross to purchase sinners. Knowing it, loving it so that your conscience is clear. Living it. To be able to rightly articulate the Gospel. Stephen did it in Acts 6-7. And to do so with a deep help confidence in the power of God to save people through the cross of Christ.

Honorable

And let them also be tested, then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. This is where we get the phrase "beyond reproach." To live in such a way that if someone were to accuse you of a heinous sin, our first reaction would be, "No Way! I know that guy and he would never blatantly or purposely dishonor God like that!" To have a reputation as a Gospel-saturated person, because you might be the first and only representation of the Gospel that people see.

Genuine

Let's read verse 11 and 12 together. ¹¹ *Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.* ¹² *Let deacons each be the husband of one*

wife, managing their children and their own households well. Consistent wife. How important it is to have a strong woman who loves Christ as much as you and lives the Gospel.

Committed to your wife. “Husband to one wife” - but not just *staying* married, a marriage that reflects the Gospel. From Ephesians 5 – a husband loving his wife like Christ does the church, giving himself up for her.

Control of your home

Managing your children and your own household well, like your home is a little church and you are striving to point everyone in that little church to Jesus, to the Gospel. Because ultimately that’s what this is about: the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel. And today we have the great honor of ordaining these men to deacon Gospel ministry. Join me as we pray for these families.

Deacon ordination is as old as the church. We will lay hands on them as a symbol and testament to what God has done and their submission to the role as deacon.

(Pastor prays)