

Confident Servants

God's Man / God's Woman / God's Servants – Lesson 3

Review

- **Two weeks ago**, we affirmed that God has saved us that we might be transformed into the likeness of His Son.
- We also examined the transformative means God provides: Circumstances, Word, Prayer, and Mutual Encouragement.

Review

- **Last week**, we examined 26 specific qualities God wants us to use for recognizing elders and pastors, including our next Senior Pastor.
- These qualities represent God's specific growth targets for men He commends.

Today

- We will consider another group that plays a vital role in Jesus church.
- The key passage is 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- Embedded in this passage are 8 key qualities we should look for in men who serve as deacons.

"Deacons, likewise, must be..."

- Verse 8: The word translated "deacons" comes from the Greek word διάκονος.
- Διάκονος is translated "servant" (19 x's), "minister" (7 times), and "deacon" (3 x's).
- Let's see what we can learn about this word, διάκονος.

Διάκονος = servant, minister, deacon

1 **1. A common household servant**

- 1 John 2:5 – *His mother said to the servants (διάκονος), "Whatever He says to you, do it."*

Διάκονος = servant, minister, deacon

2 **2. Someone in the service of Jesus**

- 2 1 Corinthians 3:5 – *What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants (διάκονος) through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.*

Διάκονος = servant, minister, deacon

- 3 Colossians 4:7 – *As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant (διάκονος) and fellow bond-servant (σύνδουλος) in the Lord, will bring you information.*

Διάκονος = servant, minister, deacon

- Can be used of a woman, but is in the feminine form.

4 ➤ Romans 16:1 – *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant (διάκονος) of the church which is at Cenchrea.*

We are all called to service

5 ➤ Matthew 20:26-28 – *“Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your **servant**, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Service can take different forms.

6 ➤ 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 **servicing of food**.* ➤

Service can take different forms.

6 ➤ *So 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. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation,*

➤

Service can take different forms.

6 *full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the **ministry** of the word.” The statement found approval with the whole congregation;* ➔

Service can take different forms.

6 *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. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.*

Service can take different forms.

- Did you catch the difference?
- The Apostles needed to prioritize their service (or ministry) assignment.
- They would focus on ministry (service) of the word and depend on others for serving tables.

Service can take different forms.

- Acts 6 does not use the title “deacon” (διάκονος) but does use related cognates.
- A group is being recognized and then entrusted with a particular service assignment that required men of character.

Service can take different forms.

- In one sense, deacons / servants / ministers can be used of anyone who is a servant of Christ.
- But there seems to be a group of “official servants” Paul recognizes in his letter to Philippi.

Service can take different forms.

- 7 ▶ *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.*
- Paul directs that a similar group in Ephesus should be qualified and recognized.

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- “Must be” is understood from “likewise.”
- Elders must be A, B, C, etc. Likewise, Deacons, X, Y, Z
- 8 ▶ 1. “men of dignity” = someone you would look up to and respect

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- This same quality is found in a list for women (1 Tim. 3:11) and older men (Titus 2:2) plus a list for all...
- 9 ▶ *Philippians 4:8 – Finally, brethren, ...whatever is **honorable**, ...dwell on these things.*

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- All of us are to be mentally engaged in becoming worthy of respect.
- But deacons need to be those you would look up to as a model servant.
- Have you ever witnessed someone who is an incredible servant in action?

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 10 2. "not double-tongued" = honest, sincere, and consistent in what he says. He is not a hypocrite
- Such a man does not say one thing and do another **OR** say one thing to one party and something else to another. Trustworthy!

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 11 3. "not addicted to much wine" = not in bondage to wine (or whatever dulls his alertness to what matters)
- His ability to make good judgments is not impaired – servants need their full faculties to get it right.

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 12 4. "not fond of sordid gain" = a man of integrity as it concerns financial matters
- This quality is needed in both elders and deacons – same term.
- This is the Judas trap!

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 13 5. "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" = tenacious and genuine in his devotion to the profound truths of the faith (as revealed by Jesus and in His Word).
- What God says is his internal compass.

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 14 6. "beyond reproach" = well spoken of by all who know him.
- Same quality as that required of elders.
 - "Beyond Reproach" = all who know him can give a good report.

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 15 1 Timothy 3:10 – *These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.*
- Not a test but about proven character.
 - Invest in them and help them make significant progress.

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 16 7. "husbands of only one wife" = singularly devoted to his wife
- This same qualification is used of elders.
 - To observe such a man is to catch a glimpse of how Jesus loves the church.

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 17 8. “good managers of their children and their own households” = attentively promotes the true good of his children and his household.
- Almost identical to one of the qualifications of an elder.

8 Qualifications for Deacons

- 5 of 8 deacon qualifications echo qualifications of an elder.
- Servant character matters!
- But there is a profound double benefit when well qualified servants serve.

Benefits for Servants

- 18 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.*
- Great confidence and high standing – how so?

Benefits for Servants

- True service (service to Christ) is about promoting the true good of someone.
- This can involve withholding something that another wants because it will work their harm.
- We do this to serve Jesus – but it costs!

Benefits for Servants

- Especially when promoting the true good of others at significant personal cost, this bolsters our assurance of our identity in Christ.
- This is the “great confidence” factor.
- 19 • Costly service bolsters assurance in Christ.

Benefits for Servants

- Service constitutes true greatness in the eyes of Jesus.
- Not so much in the eyes of the world.
- The world is after power and position, but Jesus is working from a completely different paradigm!

Benefits for Servants

- 20 Matthew 20:25–28 – *But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your **servant**,*

Benefits for Servants

- 20 *and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come **to be served**, but **to serve**, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*
- Jesus demonstrated greatness that is defined by supreme service.

Benefits for Servants

- Jesus is working from a completely different playbook than the world.
- He does not say service is but the prelude to greatness but that service **is** greatness.
- So devote yourself to the promotion of the true good of others – this is high standing.