

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Needed Qualities in A Deacon

1 Timothy 3:8; 1 Peter 5:5

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I. Introduction.

- A. Last week I taught on the office of deacon.
- B. The office of deacon is the official office of service and care of the saints.
 - 1. This group of people exists to care for the needs of the Body. It appears to be very local, meaning that they are servants to specific bodies, or local churches.
 - 2. D. Edmond Heibert, a careful New Testament scholar, makes some helpful comments with regard to the meaning of “deacon” in the bible.

The Greeks, with their strong sense of personal freedom, held a rather low view of servants. They did not exalt the servant’s position, but they did have a keen understanding of various aspects involved in the servant concept. They developed a remarkable variety of terms to express different aspects of it.² These terms naturally shade into each other and frequently it is not necessary to seek to bring out the different shades of meaning involved. But each term can be used to convey its own distinct emphasis. [he then lists six different words used in Greek to for the term “servant”]

The noun διάκονος refers to a servant in relationship to his activity, one who renders a service to another for the benefit of the one being served. Unlike the word for slave (δουλος) διάκονος implies the thought of voluntary service. It is used of the “servants” at the wedding in Cana (John 2:5, 7, 9). They were individuals who had voluntarily assumed this activity out of good will for the bride and groom. Among these various Greek words this one has the. nearest approximation to the concept of a love-prompted service. Thus basically the word “deacon” denotes one who voluntarily serves others, prompted by a loving desire to benefit those served.

- 3. This is helpful because it speaks to the heart attitude of the deacon.
 - a. They should strive to desire to serve out of love.

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b. They should make it their motive to benefit those who are being served.

4. It is good to see a person who is qualified to be a deacon or an elder.

C. Now we have already talked about what deacons are and what are their qualifications. What we will do today is build off of this and describe certain qualities that should be evident in the life of a deacon.

Applies to
elders
too!

1. But this does not mean that they must be chosen to be a deacon or elder.

2. There is wisdom in looking at their fitness for the position. Do they show qualities that are needed to effectively carry out the task of serving God's people?

II. X Key Qualities of A Deacon.

A. First, a deacon must desire to model Jesus.

1. Mark 10:32-45.

a. The heart of pride is in every one of us. Notice how Jesus clearly states His impending crucifixion in vs 33-34.

b. What then is the response by the disciples? To try to get positions of glory. Can they be any more clueless than that?

c. He then instructs them on the glory of serving in contradistinction to ruling (43-44).

d. But notice then how he holds himself up as the example in vs 45, "for..."

2. When we think of a deacon then we must think of one who loves Jesus and seeks to emulate Him.

a. We cannot die as a ransom for others, that alone belongs to our Lord.

b. But we can serve His people as He served us.

B. Second, a deacon needs to have a love for God.

1. This may be obvious but it seems to be lost on us at times.

2. In John 21, three times Peter was asked if he loved Jesus. Three times he said that he did. But what is interesting is the command that Jesus gave to him as a result. "Tend my lambs." "Shepherd my sheep." "Tend my sheep."

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3. In other words, if you love Jesus, you want to care for His people.
4. I say this often and I say it now, you cannot say you love Jesus if you do not love His Church. It is a simple, yet profound contradiction.
 - a. 1 John 4:20-1 John 5:3.
 - (1) Interesting passage because it shows the close, inseparable relationship between the Church, the Father, and obedience.
 - (2) We have here a simple test on whether our love for God is a true love or not.
 - (3) It is simply put that to love God means you love God's children.
 - (4) What does he mean in vs 20 about not being able to see God?
 - (a) It doesn't mean that it is easier to love someone you see than someone you can't see.
 - (b) It is more like what James says regarding faith.
 - (c) How can you know if a person has true, saving faith? That they have truly come to trust in Jesus?
 - (d) He says that the way to show your faith is by your works. What you do, how you live, what you delight and treasure reveals what you believe.
 - (e) In the same way, you say you love God? Well that is easy to say. But how do you show it? By loving God's children.
 - (5) On an aside, the literal rendering of 5:1 is, "Every one who is believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." In other words the verse teaches that faith is the result and evidence of being born again, not that being born again is the result of faith. There is a change in tense that the English versions obscure: "Every one who is believing (present tense) . . . has been born of God (perfect tense)." New birth precedes and enables faith. Not vice versa.
 - b. So we are looking for men and women who don't merely meet the qualifications, but who have a passion for God.
 - (1) They love Him.

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- (2) They delight in Him.
- (3) They pursue Him.
- (4) And according to this passage, it is done by loving and delighting and pursuing God's people.

c. Therefore it is only natural that

C. Third, a deacon needs to have a love for God's people.

- 1. A deacon is serving God through the serving of God's people. And the love that this man or woman shows towards God's people reflects a love that is in the heart for God.
- 2. **1 John 4:7-8** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
- 3. To love God means that you will begin to love the things that God loves.
 - a. The first is His Son, who bore your sins upon the Cross, dying because of them and rising again on the third day.
 - b. But it makes sense to see that you would love the people for whom Christ died as well! Sinners saved by the love of God who is pouring that love out into the hearts of His people.
- 4. I have often thought about the uniqueness of the family structure. It is one place you can be yourself.
 - a. You might get in trouble, you might do stupid things, you might do really, really stupid things.
 - b. But you are still family and therefore you are loved and you love.
 - c. There is a commitment that runs deep in the heart toward these other people who make up your family.
 - d. It carries you through the dark days and hard days.
 - e. The same is true for those who truly are part of God's family.
- 5. This must be evident in a deacon. Just because a person is qualified to be a deacon doesn't mean that he loves his church.

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- a. If a person is committed to the church only to a point and keeps a certain amount of himself in reserve, he will only serve the church to a point. An 'arm's length' person is not what we need.
- b. When a person hurts him, is insensitive to his labors, then there will be a temptation to leave and not put up with this silliness.
- c. But if you truly love the body like you would your family, then you deal with the problem, you stick it out and you keep plugging along.

This love of the church should manifest itself in a commitment to this church.

- a. It would be seen in their attendance.
 - b. In their giving.
 - c. In their membership.
 - d. In an already existing service.
7. A deacon who does not truly love the people is simply a mistake waiting to happen.

D. Fourth, a deacon needs to be faithful.

1. A deacon is a person who is given a task or ministry to oversee.
2. Unfaithful deacons are of no value, but faithful deacons are priceless.
3. **1 Corinthians 4:2**, . . . it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.
 - a. The word for "trustworthy" also means faithful.
 - b. It is used to refer to God, who is faithful to us and to His promises.
 - c. It is used to refer to God's Word as being trustworthy.
 - d. And it is used to describe various people the Paul sent to minister to local churches. Timothy, Tychicus, and Epaphras are all called faithful ministers, or servants.
4. A deacon must strive for faithfulness in their responsibilities or they will only create burden rather than relief.
5. One aspect of faithfulness would be an attitude of ownership.

Ministry hurts
Sandy L does a
great job -
yet unhelpful
comments...

you only have
to run something
to appo.
withfulness

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- a. They must 'own' the ministry that they have oversight of.
- b. Take for example the 7 men of Acts 6.
 - (1) A difficult and probably thankless task in many ways.
 - (2) But they owned it and they apparently ran it well, for never again do we hear of this problem arising in the church at Jerusalem.
- c. To have ownership means that the deacon is willing to correct others and be corrected.
 - (1) This is important to understand because ministry is unpleasant at times.
 - (2) It is interesting to me to watch people step into ministry leadership positions for the first time.
 - (a) There is usually a sense of expectation that is going to go down in flames in just a few short weeks.
 - (b) There is the idealistic thoughts that everyone involved will work hard and be faithful in their tasks.
 - (c) But then they find out that people don't show up when they say they will show up.
 - (d) Or they don't like to be told what to do.
 - (e) Or they resist being shown a different way.
 - (f) Or they resent your oversight over them.
 - (g) Or. . . and the list goes on.
 - (h) Sunday School teachers know this when their students come in late, no bible, no work done on the lesson, no verse memorized.....or worse yet, the person just stops coming.
 - (3) Well, a deacon needs to be willing to confront those types of things. To lovingly get in the face of those who have committed to something, but are not committed.

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- (4) But if there is no ownership, then the deacon will be reluctant to correct and reprove others.
- d. To have ownership is to be willing to be corrected as well.
 - (1) As a deacon, there will be times where your own faithfulness will be lacking.
 - (2) There will be times where a deacon must be corrected and if they do not own the ministry, then they will leave it rather than face that humbling event.
 - (3) But if their heart is one of faithfulness, then the rebuke or correction is easy to give, because there is no fight by them.
- E. Fifth, a deacon needs to be humble.
 - 1. Beloved, being a deacon is being a servant.
 - 2. They will have a level of authority, but that authority is to help them serve, not be a ruler.
 - 3. To be puffed up because you have the title, “deacon” is just plain silly and is a train wreck waiting to happen.
 - 4. Turn to 1 Peter 5:5.
 - a. 1 Peter is a wonderful book that is worthy of your careful attention. I preached through it quite awhile ago, but we should have tapes of these messages.
 - b. The theme of this book is in 1:1 and is this: *Peter tells us that we were chosen, elected by God to be aliens and strangers in this world.*
 - (1) Now, if it is the choice of God that a Christian be a stranger in this world, then the question that should be in the minds of every Christian is, “How do I live as a stranger in this world?”
 - (2) And that is what the whole of 1 Peter answers in a multitude of ways. A truly wonderful book.
 - c. In vss 1-4 Peter is dealing with the elders of the church. He gives some key commands to them and gives them a wonderful promise to hold onto in those dark times of shepherding the flock of God.

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- d. In vs 5 he now switches his attention to the rest of the church.
- (1) First he speaks directly to the young men, knowing that they are just that, young men. He reminds them that their responsibility is not to fight against the leadership, but to submit and learn.
 - (2) But then he turns to the church as a whole, notice the “all of you.”
 - (3) He commands them to clothe themselves with humility.
 - (a) “Humility of mind.”
 - (4) And now look at the verb “put on.” It literally means to tie a string. And it is used in literature to speak of the tying on of the slaves apron.
 - (5) And I have no doubt that the picture that Peter has in his mind as he writes this in John 13 where Jesus laid aside his clothes and girded himself about. He tied on the apron of a slave and he served them.
 - (6) “. . . so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.”
 - (7) So Peter is here writing this letter. He says to himself, “I have had time to think back about that event. I have analyzed the problems within the church and the answer is group therapy.....drama teams.....padded pews.....no more hymnals.....shorter sermons.....no. The answer is humble service to each other.
 - (8) The answer is to look to Jesus. To put on the apron of a slave and begin to serve the others.

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- (a) Oh beloved, do you know how many marriages, families, jobs, and church relationships would be changed, radically changed, if the believers would live this out?
 - (b) But instead we are too quick to point out what the other person did wrong. Where they are failing. When are my needs going to be fulfilled.
 - (c) We come to church and we find a church and what do we look for too often? Not whether the Word is clearly and consistently taught. Not whether the glory of God is the goal. Not whether purity within the church is maintained through discipline. Too often we choose a church where our needs our wants can be ministered to. And that is sinful thinking.
 - (d) And bottom line, we are not looking to Jesus.
 - (e) When we come to worship we ought to be dressed for worship. And the dress of a worshiper is the slave apron. And as you walk through that door each day you should, in your mind, be reaching for that apron and tying it on. Do the same in your work, in your home, and in this country. Be submissive and be servants.
- e. If this is required of all the church, most certainly deacons should be helping lead the way.

III. Conclusion.

- A. We are looking for qualified deacons.
- B. And we are looking for deacons with specific qualities.
 - 1. They seek to model Jesus.
 - 2. They love God.
 - 3. They love God's people.
 - 4. They are faithful.

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5. They are humble.

Small Group Questions

- What are some ways the deacon ministry could expand or retool itself to be more missional in its approach to serving? (SGL, have any idea written down and given to Bruce.)