

# The Ministry of Deacons in the Local Church

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**Bible Text:** 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6

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Well, take your Bibles and let's look at the office of deacons. So first look at 1 Timothy 3. Then we're gonna go to Acts 6, alright? And I've got to compress two parts into one this morning, so I'll just glean through some of this rather quickly because we have looked at all of this in the last 2-3 years and, well, in Titus we looked at the qualifications for elder again, which, by the way, the qualification for elders is very similar to the qualifications for a deacon. One of the primary differences is an elder has to be able to teach, there's a weightier emphasis on the ministry of the word and the office of deacon being a servant office that is not listed.

Anyway, 1 Timothy chapter 3 and we will begin in verse 8. Paul writes,

8 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 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women

Or wives, I interpret it as wives of deacons, even though there aren't, there was Phoebe, a deaconess and not saying that never existed but for us, uh, we only have men deacons and I believe in this context, this is speaking of the wives of deacons. Verse 11.

must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 deacons must 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.

Now go to Acts chapter 6, would you turn there? And we have what we are convinced is the first installation of men into the office of deacon in Acts chapter 6 beginning in verse 1. As you well know, the church is exploding, phenomenal numbers of people are being converted and wouldn't you know it, they start having some grumbling and complaining and some difficulties and there was merit to these complaints. Verse 1, chapter 6.

1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic [or Greek] Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

Pretty serious problem if widows who are dependent on the church for their very food are being overlooked, serious problems. So what did the church do? Verse 2,

2 So the twelve [that's the pastors in the role of apostle at this point] 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. 3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you 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 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.

Now the title of deacon has about as many connotations as there are churches to bestow it. For example, I think it would be the majority of Baptist churches that whether they admit it or not, view the deacons as an official board of oversight over the church, which is totally wrong, unbiblical, and then they view the pastors as hired to perform certain religious duties, like marrying or bearing or counseling or visiting the sick, and then in his spare time, they expect that pastor to study and preach, that is, as long as he doesn't preach anything, the deacon board might not like. That's just far too common. And too often, it's bestowed on a person as an honorary title, and it means little more than that. And we shouldn't view deacons that way, from that perspective either. It varies so much from church to church when someone says they are a deacon, you have to ask what, if anything, they actually do.

But we know the word deacon comes from the Greek word in the New Testament that means servant or table waiter. Or the word servant, the the word service, the word to serve, the word waiting on tables or waiting on people is used in the New Testament for the same Greek word we get the word deacon from. Um, John 2, verses 5 and 9 for example. Uh, first of all, "His mother said to the servants," the word servant there is the same word for deacon. "Whatever he says to you, do." And then John 2:9, "When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew)." Servants again is the word for deacon or the same root word we get deacon from. And Luke 4:39, "And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them." Serving them. That is the word for deacon.

So it is a service ministry and that's used in the New Testament both for secular service. You go to a restaurant and the waiter serves you. Well, they're deacons. Or it can be an

office of service in the church like we have as we're talking about here today. And a believer in any form of service or ministry to other believers is a servant or is a deacon, and for us at Grace Life Church, it's very important to understand that in a very real sense, all of our small group leaders, both men and women, function as deacons or deaconesses. They're caring for and serving the body of Christ, and that's a beautiful thing. It's it's been so well done by you guys in the past that often our deacons didn't know quite what to do because the small groups were taking care of so many of those service needs. But we have discovered, like when we take the Lord's table and when there's issues that are bigger than a small group can handle, we do need that official ordained body of deacons or servants that we can put in charge, using the phrase from Acts chapter 6, put in charge of those tasks.

Now let's remind ourselves that all Christians are required to render service in the local church, and for us that centers on and begins with the small group. There's no way in the world I could challenge you, "Now love all your brothers and sisters, care for all your brothers and sisters, meet one another's needs," and expect you to take care of 852,000 people. But we can organize ourselves into smaller groups, which is taught in the Old and the New Testament, so that there's eight or nine or 12 or 15 or so people that you can learn and love and bond with and form some transparency one to another, and serve and care for one another. So for us the service, all of us are in, I like to use the phrase every member ministry. That's the New Testament model.

So there's that general service that we are all to do. What does Ephesians 4 remind us of? That God gave some as pastor-teachers, uh, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. That the pastor's job is to equip and then we all together do the work of deacons or service in the church. So there's not a leadership level made-up of elders and pastors, and then a servant or service level made-up of deacons, and then a spectator level of all the rest. That's not what the Scriptures lay out. There is no audience in the church. We are all in the ministry one to another. We've all been called to submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and he said, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, with him my Father will honor." So we're all his servants and in the deepest sense, our service to Christ is centered in the local church.

So there's a general service for all of us, but then there's a a gifted service. Now all of us are to serve according to our spiritual gifts, and God scatters those out and every one of you is a snowflake, not in the modern cultural definition but every snowflake is unique and different, and God gave all of you varying percentages of mercy or helps or leadership or administration, or or whatever it might be. And so you you kind of perceive as time goes on what really kind of motivates me and drives me. You've got to get the pride out of the way at that point, make sure you're not just looking for position, but what what what do I feel blessed in, and how does God use me the best? And if you'll just serve as you are able, then later you'll discover how your gifting lines up and where you most need to be serving.

So there's general service and there's there's gifted service and then there's what we're looking at today, there's official service or an office of servant. You could change it from the deacon body to call it the servant team. Fully biblical and a good way to define the term. And as far as we know, uh, that the only office, well, as far as we know, it's clear that 1 Timothy 3 is the only passage that definitely speaks to that office, although it's very, very obvious to me that Acts 6 gives us the illustration of men appointed to the office of deacon. So we see that the office of deacon is made-up of a plurality of godly and wise men, and, uh, uh, they are led and overseeing themselves by a plurality of godly men in the office of elder and they all work together to the benefit of the church and to the glory of God.

All right. That's an introduction. I. I apologize if I'm running kind of quickly, but we've looked at this already, and I gotta get through it, all right? The requirements to be a deacons. The requirement. There are those qualifications and, uh, what we find out is that the Scripture is not really specific concerning the particular services or the particular way the deacons are to take care of the body, because that varies time to time. In Acts 6, they needed people to take care of food distribution, other times it might be taking care of sick or needy people, other times it might be putting a roof on a widow's house. I don't know it. It can vary so the Bible doesn't give us specifically, "Well, they they do just this task." Any servant task could be the responsibility of deacon. But what the Bible is very specific about is what qualifies a man to be a deacon in God's church. What a man is is more important than what a man does. The church is to be very concerned about maintaining standards of purity and integrity in the office of deacon. This is not a popularity contest. There may be some men who are more popular than others, but they may be no more qualified to be a a deacon than others. Matter of fact, I want you to pray and pray hard because some of the best deacons are not the people that pop out front because deacon service is behind the scenes that nobody sees and they've got to be content doing that kind of work. So be discerning about what kind of men do I see and do I know well enough to nominate that they have that kind of qualification?

Well, he begins and we're back in 1 Timothy 3 now, if you turn over there again. 1 Timothy 3 and, uh, looking at verse 8, he talks first of all about these must be men of dignity. Dignity. An idea of dignity is worthy of respect. They're men who are serious. They're not known as clowns in the community, or certainly in the church. There's a sense of honorableness about them, of reputable status and stateliness. Dignity.

Then moving right along, he continues there, not double tongued or given to double talk. You don't find yourself thinking they're always working in angle. They're always manipulating things around to get their personal advantage. No, they're straightforward. They're sincere. They're not hypocritical. They do not have a pattern of saying one thing to one person and then something else to another.

And then the phrase is not addicted to much wine. The idea is not lingering long over wine. We know in the first century that water was often impure, it often would make you sick, people had to drink some, uh, of a beverage like a wine beverage, but these are not

men who are known to visit the cocktail hour. They're not men who put their pictures splashed on social media, holding up their drinks. They're not known as drinkers.

And then he says they're not fond of sordid gain. Kind of like being double-tongued earlier, they're they're they're not greedy, not up to something, not known as being chasers of dishonest gain.

Then verse 9, holding to the mystery of the faith. They've proven themselves to have a stalwart conviction about the the faith, the the doctrines that were once for all given to the saints. Their convictions about truth and about the Lord, and about salvation about the church, are not based on sentimental emotion but on clear biblical truth. In other words, they're men who have, they're men who have command of their emotions, and they stand on truth and on principle.

Then he says in verse, uh, 9 that they have to have a clear conscience. Their conduct does not contradict their profession. Let me throw this out because it's so important to remember this. We're not talking about perfect men. We're not talking about men that have had absolutely no trace of a struggle in any of these areas, but the point of of being above reproach means there's no clear pattern or intentionality of these kinds of lack of character traits, you could say, in their lives.

Then verse 10, he moves on and says they they must first be tested. In other words, he's proven faithful in the service of the Lord over a period of time. The word tested here is a word for testing metals. You could go as far as to say when you test the metal, you burn off the dross, you burn off the impurities and probably a man who's deacon quality, he's been through some things. He's been through some humbling seasons. He's faced some trials maybe even for his faith to challenge his convictions and it was tough but the heat of that season purified him and he came out a more humble and better Christian.

Then, of course, that phrase, beyond reproach. We've talked about that many times. The idea is that no accusation or charge sticks. He cannot be held by a charge that he's not qualified because there's just not enough credibility to the charge because his lifestyle speaks so clearly to what it really is. But we do have to remember that a godly man is known as much by his enemies as by his friends. If you're a man of God, it does not mean people do not accuse you, but it means the accusations just don't stick.

All right, then, he says in verse 11, women, or I interpret it to be wives because it would be so awkward just to throw one verse in here if you were not talking about the flow of men and their wives because verse 12 he goes right back to the men again. Uh, I I have, I know some good and godly churches who have the office of deaconess, and basically they take care of shut-ins. I have no problem with that, but I think it's wisest and best and it's always been our practice that the office of deacon is for men, all right?

He says in verse 11 women must likewise be dignified, or the wives of deacons must be dignified, and I think one of the reasons the wives are so important here is because a lot of deacon ministry, especially in the first century but still true today, is oriented toward

widows and shut-ins because they have special service needs, and in dealing with ladies in the church, the deacon needs his wife with him for obvious reason. So a man's wife is important, uh, in his qualification for being a deacon and in his service of being a deacon. So the word dignified under wives here is the word dignity that we had under husbands, and it just means they're worthy of respect.

And then not malicious gossips, he says in verse 11. Now, he said earlier the men were not to be double-tongued. The men are more likely to be double-tongued, but women are more likely to be slanderers. I was hearing about a study not long ago of the way men and women, uh, kind of retaliate and men tend to retaliate one way, and women tend to retaliate a different way. Men tend to go straight forward and if need to, it comes to blows. Women of the time are, on the hand, are more likely to be more deceptive, and destroy your character. So it's important for all of us to have that in check.

Temperate is the next thing, well-balanced, not given to extremes. That that is such a valuable quality because God has given women such superior traits to men in the area of passion and feeling, and nurturing and caring. They are so superior. When I'm hurting, I want a lady to take care of me, preferably my wife but, uh, now honestly, when you're in the hospital, would you like a middle-aged sweet lady to come in or one of these male guys come in? I'm not picking on you male nurses. I know you're wonderful. I just don't feel as tenderly cared for when you come in as I do with the other. It's just the way God made us. Nothing wrong with being a male nurse. Praise God for them. We need more of them. But, ladies are just different. But what I'm getting to, ladies have that capacity. They're nurturers. They feel more deeply. Things filter through their emotions and it's easy to get out of balance. It's easy to get way too far over here and then get way too far over here. But as a lady matures, she grows from being what Paul calls a silly woman who follows emotional extremes to a principled woman, still has those but she keeps herself centered. So what the text is saying here, it's not perfectly, but this is a lady who's got herself more centered, and she don't tend to follow emotional extremes. Brothers and sisters, we have a country going straight to hell because we are being led by passionate, sentimental emotionalism instead of truth and principle. That's exactly what's happening out there and the Bible just spells it all out. But the church should not be run by the emotions of silly and wicked emotion led people.

Not given to extremes, that's temperate, and then faithful in all things. This woman should have shown a decent consistency in loving her husband and honoring her husband and caring for her children and keeping her home and in serving Christ in his church.

Now we come back to verse 12 and we're back to men again. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and again, that's the same as he says an elder, known as a one-woman man, there's no serious, uh, uh, accusation of him not being faithful to his marriage vows. Of course, in this day, it ruled out, uh, polygamy, of course, and that was quite common in this era. It's not common at all today, except in a few remote corners. So promiscuity and polygamy would be ruled out or would rule you out as consideration.

And then good managers of their children and their own households. Again, not perfect, not that they haven't had a difficulty with a child or whatever, but they dealt with it right and they did the right things, and there's been a proven record of doing well and managing their children and their households.

So that's a brief run-through, again because we've looked at this a time or two in the last few years, then we come to II: the responsibilities of a deacon. The responsibilities. Now we're gonna go over to Acts chapter 6 where this is the only place we know of in the New Testament that we see men, uh, appointed to the, uh, office of of deacon and to what end or what were their responsibilities, and I'm convinced we can glean things that apply to every church and in every era.

So again, in verse 1 it tells us the disciples we're increasing. This is the greatest revival that has ever occurred on the face of the earth and a host of people, thousands of people are being converted. They're all trying to figure this thing out and see how it's going to work. And then there arose, the New American Standard says, a complaint, or you could say a murmuring on the part of the Greek Jews against the native Hebrew Jews, because their widows, the Greek widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So these are growth pains in the early church and something I've said to you many times, that you have to keep trying to grasp this, you cannot really grasp the amount of dislike, maybe even hate, certainly prejudice between the Greek culture and the Jewish culture and the Jewish culture and the Greek culture. So here, here are these Greek, uh, uh, culturally Greek Jewish ladies and the culturally Greek Hebrew or or native Hebrew ladies were all being served food because they had nothing to eat, and for some reason the Greek widows were being overlooked and there became a complaint.

Here's one thing we learn: Satan always tries to find the crack our crevice to come into the church, always looking for a way to stir up discord, always prodding a little, complaining or murmuring, and he's always been. matter of fact, think of the ways Satan has tried to persecute this early church already. First, he tried just plain out persecution, just the legal authorities saying, "Quit preaching these things," to which the disciples, the apostles replied and said, "We must obey God rather than men." So when Satan tried to persecute the church, God responded with determination. And then he tried corruption in the church, Ananias and Sapphira saw that they could gain a high standing and power and popularity. They paraded before the church all the great gifts they were given saying they gave everything to the church's cause when in fact they were lying. It wasn't the fact that they kept some back, it's the fact that they were using the church for their own glory. And so when Satan tried to bring corruption into the church, God responded with discipline. God removed Ananias and Sapphira and kept the church pure.

So now Satan is trying to hurt the church with division and God's answer is deacons. It's pretty powerful. If somebody comes to me and says, "Pastor, you know, we've got this group over here at Grace Life and, man, they're working against this group over there, and there's been some backbiting and just getting starting to get ugly," my first thought is, "Where the deacons?" That's their job. They're to make sure that stuff doesn't go on in

God's church. That's why they've got to be men of wisdom and Spirit-filled and have respectability about them.

So come to the first subpoint under responsibilities: these men are to stop the murmuring and preserve unity in the local church. Stop murmurings and support unity in the local church. That's why these men were selected and we see that in the rest of the verses, verse 2, it's not desirable for the preachers to neglect the word to serve tables. So you guys select some men and let them take care of this task.

So the deacons were originated to solve problems. I I like to view them as the white blood cells of the church. Something comes in to hurt your body, God's made our body so that white blood cells rush to that area and attack that bacteria or that infection. And I read in a a medical journal or something somewhere the other day that, uh, and this isn't very nice and pleasant, I guess. That pussy stuff that's on a sore, those are white blood cells that came and gave their all to prevent that from hurting the body. It's a powerful picture, a rush to the issue and bring it to a righteous and biblical conclusion.

So these men were appointed to find a solution and stop the strife spreading and the division that was occurring in the early church. Now secondly, very clear here that their responsibility was to free the pastor-teacher to study and preach. To free the pastor-teacher, in this case, the 12 apostles so that they could study and preach. Look at there in verses 2 and 4. In verse 2, "So the twelve," that's the 12 apostles, "summons the congregation of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.'" And I'm going to tell you, that would not float in most Baptist churches. If their sweet little lady's not being fed their necessary food, the church would have never accepted the pastor saying, "I don't have time to do this. I need to study and preach." But that's what the text says. Not that the pastor didn't care deeply, they just thought, "Why should we do what anyone can do when none of them men are called to do what we must do?" That's the point, and I'll talk about that just a tad more in a moment.

Look at verse 4, if you will, "But we," the apostles, parallels pastors today, "we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." You see, when a pastor has so much on him that he neglects time in the word and in prayer, then the entire church will suffer and Satan has won this battle so many times. I can't tell you the number of churches I've dealt with where pastors are called upon to do dozens and dozens and dozens of things, and if they don't do those dozens and dozens and dozens of things, certain people will get upset and begin to talk bad about the pastor, and then he's trying to use his leftover energy to do the one thing God said he must do well, study and preach.

Warren Wiersbe in his commentary on Acts 6 said this, "It creates a spiritual deficiency when the pastor is doing all these jobs that deacons and others should be doing. It creates a spiritual deficiency that makes it easy for problems to arise, and the entire church will suffer." John Phillips in his commentary on this passage says, "There was no point in the apostles doing something that everyone could do when they, the apostles, could do things that no one else could do. It was not a question of position, but a question of priorities. It



was not that the apostles thought it beneath their dignity to run the errands of the church, it was simply a matter of putting first things first." And by the way, uh, one scholar said the word deacon in in in one good understanding was it is one who runs errands. They go run that errand and get that thing fixed.

Deacons exist to be a blessing to their pastors and to the church body, enabling him, the pastor, to devote himself to the ministry of the word and prayer, which, in turn, is a blessing to the whole body. All right, so one of their responsibilities is to stop complaining or murmuring and preserve the unity of the church, another responsibility from our text is to free the pastor-teacher to study and to preach, and then thirdly, a responsibility is to be nominated by the body. Look at verse 3 if you will. The body is involved here and they bring to the apostles the men they discern should take care of this problem. "Therefore, brethren," verse 3, "Therefore, brethren select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task." So while the apostles had the authority to make these decisions, they wisely chose to involve the congregation, and that's the balance that I've worked so that we always have here. There's elder rule and elder authority that's thoroughly biblical, but there should be congregational input on important issues, and we have congregational affirmation for major things like a building project or the annual budget and intellectual property issues, or whatever else seems like it should come before the body.

So the pastors brought this to the body and asked them to join in with them in doing this, again, the apostles could have chosen, and and by the way, uh, if I named the men, you would all know who I'm talking about, godly men that we all respect, their churches the elders appoint the deacons. It doesn't go to the congregation. But I, it's, and I I don't know if I can, I can't say this emphatically, but I do not remember a time in any nomination process of either elder or deacon at Grace Life Church, where the elders did not think your choice was the right choice. I mean, when with the men you'd nominate, matter of fact, the last time we had an elder nomination, I think we had like 18 men who got the exact number of nominations. The point is, there are more men well thought of than we can use. That's a good problem. So I appreciate the congregation prayerfully being involved in this and taking this first step.

Uh, one commentary writer wrote this and I just thought it was excellent. I don't know who wrote it, but somebody did. "There's no doubt that the local church is to be ruled by its elders but the local church is not a democracy. It is ruled by Spirit-appointed elders. At the same time, it is not a dictatorship. So here we have the first hint of that happy blending of pastoral and here apostolic authority and congregational activity working towards a united decision which should characterize all local church affairs." And then he said, "I want you to pick these guys," or the apostle said, "church, pick these guys out," and quite honestly, folks, I don't know how this came down. You've got thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of people. It, I don't know how they, how did they pick seven? I don't know. You you there had to be some sort of a system to come down to that, but it they did it and it worked.

So three criterion that Acts points out: they had to be of good reputation, they'd have to be full of the Spirit and full of wisdom. So as you nominate men, do they have a long standing good reputation? Do you sense these are Spirit-led men, they follow the word of God? And by the way, there's no such a thing as being Spirit-led and not following the Scriptures. The moment you're weak on the word, you're weak in following the Spirit. And then full of wisdom, they're men that just seem like they could manage something and make right decisions in difficult situations. And then lastly, D, the responsibility is to honor the church elders. To honor the church elders. Look at verse 3B. So the first part of verse 3 in Acts 6, he says, "You, congregation, select these seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom whom we," that's back on the apostles, "that we may put in charge of this task. They're working under our oversight but we want you to choose the men you think are properly, uh, qualified."

And then, um, verse 6, "And they," the congregation, "brought before the apostles again and after praying, they," the apostles, "laid hands on them." So the laying on of hands was a a common custom for men being ordained to an office, and the elders were saying, "They are an extension of us to take care of the body of Christ and they have our blessing as we over see them."

Now as we talk about the functions of elders in the church and the functions of deacons, far too often people try to view this on a horizontal plane and they'll say things like this, "Well, the elders take care of the spiritual matters matters, but the deacons take care of material matters." That just doesn't hold up with the New Testament. That's not true. The way the New Testament puts it is elders are over the totality of the church. By the way, material things are spiritual too. The elders are over the totality of the church, and the deacons function under the elders in taking care of service ministries in the body of Christ.

So they identified with these men by laying their hands on them and blessed them to do this work and take care of this work. It's not noted in the text, but I think undoubtedly these men rejoiced and gloried in being appointed to this servant task to help the apostles and to bless the body of Christ. They were the agents of unity and they indeed prevented an early church split in the body of Christ.

Now, if you've been a Baptist for a long time, how many church splits do you know of where the elders helped lead it? Or where the deacons helped lead it. Well, they're supposed to be helping prevent it. Now I understand and this is something we wrestle with with our churches, and we just had a church church plant lose about half of their body because they had a a rebellious man who would not cooperate unless he got his way and it was a difficult thing. Sometimes things have to be dealt with, but often the splits and frustrations and complaints and confusions in church life is over the most inconsequential things, things that just really don't matter at the end of the day. By the way, if I should say it this way, there's some things to split a congregation over. Amen, Dr. Seal? He split one. Actually he didn't do it, God did it. He stood on God's truth and they split but God planted a new church out of it and blessed it for 10 years in wonderful

ways. But in the context of what we're looking at, this was not something to split the church over. It just needed to be fixed and the elders are the fixers.

III. I'll just barely mention this. III. Notice the reward of faithful deacons. The reward of faithful deacons. We see this back over in 1 Timothy 3, if you would, and I apologize again for sprinting through here if you haven't looked at this with us already several times, I know it might be like getting a drink out of a fire hydrant but you can go back and hear the messages if you want to pull them up online also.

1 Timothy 3:13, Paul writes, "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing." Let's stop there for a moment. The idea is when you're willing to work hard and be a servant behind the scenes, making sure the body of Christ stays united and freeing the men of God to preach the word of God, the saints of God will really respect you and hold you in high esteem. It does something to the saints' heart to see a man functioning that way. And while it's not absolute in any way, but it's probable that men who first serve faithfully as deacons, some of them become elders in God's church. It's not a stepping stone thing at all, that's not what I mean, but but it it's understandable that that would happen.

So a high standing and then an interesting thing is pointed out in verse 13, "and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus." In other words, being biblical and faithful in your service as a deacon affirms the authenticity of your faith in Christ, and it affirms the authenticity of the genuineness, means the same thing, doesn't it, the genuineness of your faith not only to the people around you, but to yourself. It assures you. You might be sitting around some day and saying, "Man, I've been doing these this task and this task and this work and this work and I just praise the Lord for letting me do that. God must have saved me because I wouldn't normally do this. God must have really changed me. I must really have the new heart and the new birth or, in other words, I wouldn't rejoice in this."

And by the way, aren't these things radically in contrast with the present age? The present age says, Be on top. Be in command. Don't serve unless they give you credit for it. Make sure you get your way." No, in the church that will diminish your standing when the church serving to bless the body to free up the pastors is what will cause you to be in high standing, and it will give you a great confidence in your faith. It's kind of like, um, in 2 Corinthians 13:5 where it says test yourself to see if you're in the faith, examine yourselves. So one way for you to examine yourself, do you enjoy serving the body of Christ and not getting any credit? That's a good test to see if you're in the faith.

Well, I've got some CPAs and we'll just look at them but, first, these men proved that Philip, one of the first deacons, was the first church's martyr. We see that in Acts chapter 8. And Stephen, one of the first deacons, was, I'm sorry, Philip was the first church's missionary and Stephen, rather, was the first church's martyr as we see in Acts chapter 7.

Now things for you to contemplate as we go forward. I won't much more than mention these. They'll be on the screen. Number 1, you are nominating men who have been tested.

You are nominating men who have been tested. You've seen in them a gospel humility, a keen awareness of what they are before God in their sins and a keen treasuring of Christ and who he is, and they've lived that way in their service to the church. You are nominating men who've been tested.

Secondly, you are nominating men not to bestow honor upon them. Not to bestow honor upon them. It is an honor once a man serves faithfully as a deacon, it's an honorable thing, but you are not selecting them because he's a great guy, he loves Jesus, I think he deserves this honor. We don't need men who want honor. We need men who want to serve. Then the honor comes.

Thirdly, you are nominating men realizing that availability is rarer than ability. We don't necessarily need the sharpest, slickest guy, the wisest Bible scholar. There'll be good and godly men who don't serve but men who are willing to be available. Now let me say something here. You may know of a brother and say, "I think he'd be a great deacon but, man, he's got himself spread so thin." Well, here's what I've seen through the years. I've seen men that once challenged with this, they restructure their lives and they become available. So don't necessarily rule a guy out if you think he's spread too thin. If he has heart for it, maybe he'll make that adjustment and become.... And and by the way, that's kind of the way men are. They go for things and they initiate things and they conquer things, and maybe they just need to be shown, "Well, what about this? Would you take this on?" Just a balance.

Number 4, you are nominating men to be officially responsible to maintain peace in the church so that the preaching of the word can proceed unmolested. And note the phrase "officially responsible." When we pray over these men and we present them to the body and you say amen, let's make them the deacons of our church, they become officially responsible for a very, very significant and important thing in the eyes of God.

Number 5, you are nominating men who will incur a stricter judgment if they are placed in this service. It's a bigger responsibility. There's more accountability. To whom much is given much is required.

Number 6, you are nominating men to fulfill your responsibility to care for Christ's church. In other words, this is an important role you have to nominate the right men because that's a way we care for the body by having the right men in the office of deacon.

So I just wanna emphasize again pray and don't get that list and look at it and just go down through their names and check guys that touch your heart. Pray first, then look them up on the list. That's my challenge because it's your responsibility, church, to take this seriously and be wise about who we nominate. And here's the good thing at Grace Life Church and I mean this with all sincerity. I looked at the list and there's not a handful of men I wouldn't think could be a good deacon. That's a wonderful problem to have, but I don't need 300 deacons. So it's just a wonderful thing. There are just good and godly men who will never be elders, and there are good and godly men who serve Christ's church who just don't feel like they need to be in the office of elder.

Number 7, you are nominating men who may not desire to serve at this time. Going along with what I just said, that is, there are some really good and qualified and godly men, and I've had this happen many times through the years, who say, "Pastor, I'm honored that people would view me this way, but I just don't think I should do this." And do you know what I've learned? Leave it right there. Now, if you nominate a brother and he doesn't do it, don't go to him and say, "Why didn't you do that? I thought you'd do, I thought you'd be a good deacon." Leave him alone. He may have a challenge with his wife right now that nobody needs to know but him and his wife and Jesus and he just don't need to serve as a deacon. So he says, "Pastor, I just don't think I should do this." He may have a challenge with children or finances or just work load and just say, "You know, pastor, I I just don't feel like I'm I'm led to do this." My own father-in-law got as many votes for elder as any man ever has in the church, but he told me, he said, "I just don't want to do that, Jeff. I don't think it's my calling. It wouldn't be good since I'm your father-in-law." And he'd been a faithful deacon until he was sick and not able to serve anymore. So if a brother feels he can't do it, leave it at that. Don't press him. We ought to have some things we struggle with that we don't have to share with everybody. Amen? Just because I've seen that happen through the years.

So when you leave today or whenever you want to pick up one of those ballots, I had one, don't know where it is. Pick up one of those nomination ballots back there. Everyone on there has to be 21 years of age and have been a member of Grace Life Church for three years. That's the ones that are listed, and they're presently men who are in good standing. We have left 2-3 names off, maybe a little bit more than that, men like my father-in-law, who obviously can't serve anymore. So it's obvious not to put them on the list. Um, the names that are in bold, the names on the list that are in bold are men who are presently deacons, and I hope you'll renominate those men unless some of those guys tell us, "I I just don't think I should do this any longer." That's fine. So check those names that are bold and then the other names that you think it's proper to do so. Then sign your name to the ballot. We don't want any bogus ballots. Not that there would be, but in a church where deacons are like a board who rule over the church, there's a lot of politics that gets into it, but we don't do that and you don't do that, all right? Uh, drop the ballots in those black offering boxes. You could drop it off at the church. I think you had to fold it a couple of times to get it through the slot. Drop them in there and obviously you must be a member of Grace Life Church to nominate men. The ministry of deacons in the local church.