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Who are the Deacons? Acts 6:1-7

GPBC

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Introduction – Next week we will be selecting 4 men to serve GPBC as deacon. In light of that, last week we studied this same passage and asked the question “Why do Churches Need Deacons?” It’s a good question to ask, especially since the word deacon means “servant” and we are to be serving one another. So why do we need an office in the church designated “deacon”?

We understand Acts 6 represents the early formation stages of the church as it begins to develop in Jerusalem. In these formative days an issue arises in how the ministry of the church is being conducted, and it has the potential to be an explosive, church-splitting issue. The resolution was to select a group of men who would oversee the widows distribution to ensure equality and stop division. Churches need deacons to keep priority on the ministry of the Word and prayer, because members have genuine needs, and to preserve unity in the body.

The question today from this text is “Who are the Deacons?” Now that we understand why we need deacons, how do we as church members recognize those who are to be serving us as deacons? How do those who are to be deacons recognize that God is calling them to this service? Who are the deacons?

- I. Men from the Local Church (vv2-3)
 - a. First, note that the entire church is to be involved in this selection process. The word “brothers” in v3 can just as easily be translated as “brothers and sisters”. Just as the word “mankind” does not mean just the men of humanity but rather all males and females, so this word means all believers in the church. The whole church is involved.
 - b. Second, the idea of selection in the words “pick out.” We don’t know exactly how the early church went through the process of picking out these men, but we do know they went through some kind of process. The point is not the process but that there is a process of selection.
 - c. Third, note that the men who serve as deacons come from within that local congregation. “pick out from among you”
 - i. This is how God works within His church to provide for His church. God builds up each congregation in many ways – by

number through conversions (v7), by deepening our faith and understanding through the ministry of the Word (v7), and by raising up and equipping fellow members within the church to meet the needs of the church (v3).

- ii. In other words, God has already been at work in our deacon selection process. He has been raising up and equipping 4 men to serve us in this way. Our responsibility is to be in prayer so that we may faithfully determine who those 4 men are. The work of selecting deacons doesn't begin next week, it's been going on for years.
 - iii. Only God knows what the next 3 years hold for Grassy Pond Baptist Church. Only God knows what needs will arise, what decisions will need to be made, what challenges we will face that could chip away at our unity. God knows the next 3 years; we do not. Cf. Prov 27:1 And God has the right men for the right time waiting for the church to pick them out from among us.
 - iv. Next week is not a popularity contest; it is a solemn duty. We need the right men to be part of our leadership for the next 3 years.
- d. I am thankful that our process here at GP is biblical in these ways. Our whole congregation will be involved, we will select men, and they will be from our own congregation. Now what we need to be in much prayer that we will select the men that He has been preparing.

II. Men Who Exhibit a Growing, Mature Faith (v3)

- a. The 3 questions we should be praying are, God who are the men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom? That's not to say there's only 4 men in our congregation with those qualities, but it is to say that the four men we select next week must have them.
- b. First, it matters what the church knows about these men. They are men of good repute.
 - i. Men of good repute. That speaks to their reputation, their witness, their testimony. Are they men who have demonstrated a living, growing faith in Jesus Christ? Are they men who have demonstrated a love for Grassy Pond? Since we are calling them to be servants, are they men who are already

serving and have servant hearts? Do their character and actions reflect godliness? Are they an example of faith to others? Are they men of integrity? Men of good repute.

- c. Second, it matters what God knows about these men. Full of the Spirit. That means 2 things: They have been born again and they are walking worthy of that calling.
 - i. You don't have the Spirit at all unless you are a believer. Once we come to faith in Christ, we are indwelt by the Spirit of God.
 - 1. John 14:16-17 "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."
 - ii. So all believers possess the Spirit of God at conversion, but then there is the ongoing filling of the Spirit which means the closer we walk with the Lord, the more we yield our lives to the Lord, the more evident is the Spirit's presence within us.
 - 1. Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."
- d. Third, it matters what the church knows about these men, it matters what God knows about these men, and finally it matters what these men know. Full of wisdom.
 - i. I mentioned last week, this is not referring to common sense, conventional wisdom, street smarts, skills, experience, or degrees. Those things are useful. Those things can be used as tools in conjunction with and in submission to godly, biblical wisdom, but those things are not godly, biblical wisdom.
 - ii. What is this wisdom?
 - 1. Prov 1:7 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."
 - 2. Prov 8:13 "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil."
 - 3. Prov 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."
 - 4. Prov 15:33 "The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor."

5. Prov 16: 6 “by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil”

iii. Wisdom is the fear of the Lord. The fear the Lord is a great, humble desire to please the Lord coupled with a great distaste for anything that would displease the Lord. That’s being full of wisdom. Wise living is living for the Lord, for nothing is to be gained and all is to be lost in not living for the Lord.

e. Who are the 4 men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom?

III. Men Set Apart to Serve the Church (v3,6)

- a. Deacons are men from within the congregation, recognized by the congregation as men equipped by God for the task of serving the church, and then set apart for this office through prayer and the laying on of hands. We call this an ordination service.
- b. Through prayer – we pray for these men that God will strengthen and lead and bless them as they serve, we pray for their wives and children as husband and dad step into this office, we pray that God may keep them just as He has equipped them.
- c. Through the laying on of hands – symbolizes the church is giving these men the authority to serve in this way, officially and publicly recognizing them as their deacons. Set apart to serve.

Conclusion – 1 Tim 3:8-13 – That sounds like men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.

Now let me say a quick word to those men who may be approached to serve. It is an awesome, solemn request when a church asks you to serve as their deacon. Don’t take it too lightly and don’t answer too quickly. Take it to prayer. If you think, “Well it’s about time. I’ve got some things I need to straighten out.” You’re not that man. We’ve made a human error. Politely decline. If you think, “I don’t have the time.” Think on that a little longer. Maybe God is asking you to set some other things aside for a while and serve His people. If you think, “I’m not ready or I’m not good enough.” Think on that a little longer. Don’t take it too lightly that the whole church believes you are ready and God has equipped you. In fact, if you don’t think you’re good enough, that’s actually why you are ready to serve. God is looking for the humble, not the prideful.

Don't be disappointed if you are equipped to serve and not asked. That only means God has another area of service for you.