

DEACONS / ROLES / “BRIDE OF CHRIST”

Why do you work? We live in a culture that has made work about purpose or status. We all expect it should give us purpose or some kind of standing in our own mind or others - and when it doesn't - then all these other reasons come into play. *Work for the weekend, for a living, to please the boss, until its 5 o'clock somewhere, or so we can play. Work was never meant to give us purpose or standing. Rather, our purpose & standing is to be found in Christ's work: his life, death, and resurrection. This gives our work purpose - no matter what we do. However, because our work often doesn't give us the meaning or standing we are looking for - we come to the church, the bride of Christ to work - hoping we can find something more significant in our service here. Serving in the church, is definitely meaningful - loving kids, helping another grow in Christ, caring for the hurting, organizing a team of servants to help those in need, engaging students in their lives, helping another parent find some sanity in Jesus - all these things are meaningful - but is our service to Jesus and others suppose to give us meaning and standing before others and God - or to ourselves?*

Today, as we finish up our series on roles in the bride of Christ or the church - I want to be upfront about God's words to us today: our role and our work in that role - no matter what it is - never gives us the meaning or standing we long for or need before God. Rather, it is Christ's work that gives us the standing we long for and in this standing - God moves us to serve Him and others. Today, we are going to look at the role of deacon or literally a servant - who helps lead a group of servants. But the truth behind how God calls deacons to serve is true for all:

Holding fast to Christ's work, we serve others from our standing with Christ - not for it.

1. Who does God call to be a deacon?
2. What is the main call of a deacon?

Recap - Roles in the Body:

Jesus: Fully God - He is the Head of His Church

Members: All who have faith in Christ to be right with God - are members of God's family and are royal priests who serve God and others

Elders: Lead servants - who shepherd and oversee the whole body

Deacons: Servants - who help lead a group of servants in the body

1. Who does God call to be a deacon?

• Men and Women

As the elders, do we hold to this view because it is more culturally correct in our modern culture to believe this? NO - rather, we believe this is what the Bible has always taught. We believe that there is Biblical and historical evidence for women and men deacons who serve alongside and under male eldership.

- 1) **Biblical evidence:** **TIM 3:11 (ESV)** Their wives likewise must be The word “wives” (in the Gr language is *gunē*) can be translated wife, woman, bride, and widow. We hold to the view - as do many in the church - that this word here should be translated WOMEN - not wives. It should be woman - referring to women deacons:
1] The words, “like wise,” are the translation of *hōsautōs* (ὡσαυτως), which is used in introducing a second or third in a series. The series here is of church leaders beginning in vs 1 - elders, vs 8 - men deacons, vs 11 women deacons; 2] there is no possessive pronoun in the Greek, which would be needed if the women were the wives of the deacons; 3] the 4 qualifications which follow for women are the same basic 4 qualifications required for men except for leading well as the head of family. They are: dignity of life, honesty in words, control of life, and trustworthy in life; and 4] Why do only deacons have qualifications for their wives? Why not the elders if the role of an elder affects the whole - should they not have qualifications as well. *The biblical evidence points overwhelmingly toward the idea that women and men can serve as deacons.*
- 2) **Historical evidence:** **ROM 16:1** / I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae. Phoebe is mentioned as a deaconess (*word deacon but in the feminine*) and her role in the church. Historically - the writings of early church fathers are full of women who were deaconesses by office in the local churches.

• Qualified Servants

TIMOTHY 3:8-12 (ESV) 8 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.

character - their character must reflect the humility and servant nature of Christ
- dignity (are they always offending or hurting others - or are they respectful and good to others)

- **tongue** (double-tongued or slanderer – are they defined by how they hurt others with their tongue)
- **self-control** (controlled by alcohol or others or rage or jealousy)
- **trustworthy** (not seeking self gain, greedy, faithful, honest)
- **head of family** (one wife – polygamy reference not divorce and manage their children)

- **Mature Servants** tested – blameless – not defined by ongoing sin means maturity. Defined by repentance and joy.
10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.

So – is being a deacon – like being a super church spiritual church member or like a Special Forces soldier in the army. The elite of the church. Which means only a few are really called to do this?

How do you feel – when another parent leaves it up to you to parent their kids – without asking? I'm not talking about that rare moment (all parents have had) where we forgot we had kids and someone else had to step in and stop them from destroying themselves or someone's things at a party. That's all of us. No – I'm talking about the kid you have to parent on an ongoing basis because the dad or mom just doesn't. They live in your neighborhood or they are on your team. You get frustrated – but more you are sad and think. You don't get to abdicate parenting. It is not a special gifting or calling a few get. It is a responsibility all get when God gifts you with a family and children. No one is an expert – but we all serve as parents because we are a part of a family.

When you are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, when eternal life is blown in to your soul by faith in Jesus' work to give you right standing and relationship with God Almighty – you become part of God's family! You are adopted into his family, as his daughter or son, you become his princess and prince – eternally a part of God's family. And just like you grow up in your biological family, if you are a part of God's family you will grow up in Christ (Phil 1:7)- you will begin to be changed in your character & actions. As we grow up – all are given the responsibility of helping those who are younger grow up. *We become spiritual parents*

Hear me as gently and lovingly and yet truthfully as I can say this – We believe - being a deacon is something all of us are called to do at some point as we grow in the family of God – **because** we are a part of the family. *Just as parenting is not a special gift to a few adults with children* - being a deacon is not about special gifting. Rather – being a deacon is about maturity. All the gifts of the Spirit are needed to be a deacon. As you grow – those younger or new in Christ – or who may not know Christ in the church setting – need you to parent them – direct them, organize them, care for them – whatever your gift is. **If you have grown for many years in Christ – please consider these following thoughts from a shepherd who loves you.**

- 1) **During some seasons – you don't need to serve as a deacon.** *Family – needs your focus. Rest from serving is needed. Healing is needed. This is ok – for a season!*
- 2) **You may have never served as a deacon – because you didn't know this is your calling as you mature.** *You are being made aware, you are mature, those less mature need you, & the body needs you.*
- 3) **You may not be serving – because you don't feel as if you are needed.** *You look around this place and you see many serving as deacons – 53. Could they need more? Do they need me? Yes! How could my gifts help – learn and see. Our next series – equipped to serve and our Equipped to Serve Class in October will answer many of those questions. Pray and ask – you are needed!*
- 4) **You may not be serving - because you are scared.** *I get it – I ran from God's calling to me to lead other servants for a lot of years. **Jonah – off to another land because I did not want to mess it up or did not want the responsibility and many other reasons. Can I speak courage into you today – Servants – leading servants is not about The Summit being more efficient as a church. First and foremost, God matures you not so you can have knowledge or so we can have a more efficient church - but God transforms your life, your character and actions so you can know the joy of His life & so He can use your life, your work – to help others know His joy!***

How do you know if God is calling you to be a deacon?

Pray. If you are currently a servant on a team in our body – ask your deacon leader or elder who leads that team. Do you think I am qualified to be a deacon? What do I need to work on? Could I step up and help serve in this ministry to lead other servants? Ask your leader – Ask God?

02. What is the main call of a deacon?

TIMOTHY 3:8-13 (ESV) 8 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.

What commands define our call?

The “must bes” in vs 8, 11 define our character that qualify us.

Vs 10 - "Let them be tested" helps defines our maturity.

Vs. 13 - "For those who serve well" is not really a command - but there is an implication there - serve. He even talks about a good standing in how we serve and great confidence in Christ. Is this what God is saying ...

Serve well - and then you will gain a standing before God and others? We must read scripture in order. What did God tell us to do first - that anchors our call to serve? Vs 9 - HOLD / to what ... the mystery of the faith.

9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

• **Hold fast to Christ's work -**

- **To Christ's work - the Gospel** - This is the mystery of the faith.

1) **I PETER 3:18** / Christ's work

2) **II CORINTHIANS 5:20** / Gives us a right standing before God

3) **COLOSSIANS 1:21-23** / And a clear conscience before God and others through faith in His work

- **Hold fast** - Hold onto that which Christ has done. *Not what you have done or your faith in Him.*

Why do you not jump of the edge of a canyon or high building when something in you says fly? Hold on to the truth of gravity - this anchors you from jumping off a building - even if you don't understand the science of it all.

We hold on - by anchoring deep, immersing our mind and heart in the truth of the gospel in God's word.

CGs, DNA, sermon, Steps - people, friends, family who help us hold on to the mystery of faith in Christ's work.

Gospel truth about God: *He loves us, has done the work for us by being a Servant first, He now calls us to give others a picture of His service and join Him in his grand redemption work.*

Gospel truth about us: *I am not a hired hand just out to do work to make His church more efficient, I'm not a hired hand who gets standing for service well done. I am a daughter/son, I am a prince, princess, I am a servant of the King - who serves not to get standing - but from my standing.*

I TIMOTHY 3:9, 13 (ESV) 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith ... 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.

Hacksaw Ridge: Desmond Doss (Battle of Okinawa) *This man stood on his beliefs (not to bear arms) - impressive, but his beliefs just made people mad. However, when he ran into the battle with bullets flying, sacrificing his life to save the lives of 75 men over several days, this moved people. His sacrifice was so profound - it moved the very men who had fought with on that ridge to go back and lay down their lives to take that ground. They waited and would only go up with him.*

Phil 2 - Jesus lived out Hacksaw Ridge for us. He sacrificed everything to give us life. He even took on our wounds, our sin, our brokenness to give us life. And not just life - but life as sons/daughters, prince and princesses - His very own. In doing this - you need to hear and anchor in this truth like gravity. You are seen as right before God. Your standing is complete - blameless. And you need to hear this love - *you have this standing because of Christ. And you are not just right - you are loved and accepted fully - and have his joy.*

Holding fast to Christ's work, we serve others from our standing with Christ - not for it.

PRAYER - *If you have never trusted your soul, your standing before God to Christ's work - do it now.*

Baptism Class - next week / Baptism - Sept 10th - Join us!

Holding fast to Christ's work, we serve others from our standing with Christ - not for it.

This applies to us all as God's own by Christ work.

- **This affects why we work** at our jobs. *May we hold fast to Christ's work and serve others in our job so they can see the GREAT ONE - who gave it all for us to be with Him and be right and acceptable before Him. PRAYER*
- **This affects how we serve at home.** *May we hold fast to Christ's work and serve our spouse and our kids from our great standing - not to get one. May we hold fast so our family can see the gospel of Jesus and want Him. PRAYER*
- **This affects how we serve here in Christ's body.** *May we serve from his standing and truly help others see the love and truth of Jesus in our simple acts and words of service. PRAYER*
- **This affects deacons** - *may you serve by leading other servants to see the One True Servant Jesus!*