Deacon Ordination — Delivery Transcript

Acts 6:1–7; 1 Timothy 3:8–13 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, March 5, 2023 · *Standalone Sermons — 2023*

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> ⚠️ ***AUTO-GENERATED TRANSCRIPT — verify against the audio before quoting publicly.*** *Produced from a Descript transcription of the Broadview Church sermon recording and lightly cleaned (filler words removed, obvious mis-hears of names and Scripture references corrected). No timestamps. The posted recording is the full Sunday-evening ordination service (welcome, a baptism, testimonies from the six men being ordained, and congregational singing); this transcript covers Wes's message and the commissioning that follows it, ending with the prayer of commissioning. Scripture readings follow the ESV, which Wes was reading from in 2023. This is not a publication-ready manuscript and it is not Wes's exact words for print. Check any line against the recording before it goes on a graphic, in an email, or in a book.*

Since we had each of the guys share their testimony and there were six of them, I want to be very short in my words to them and to you as a congregation. I don't want to make too much of a big deal out of this, but I also don't want to make too little of this. I do think the scripture teaches some form of ordination process for pastors and for deacons as we saw in Acts chapter six. And I think it's a way for our church to recognize not only the character of these guys and God's calling on their life, but also God's blessing on us as a church that he would raise these kind of men up in our church to be called to serve.

And so I think tonight's important for those reasons. I just wanted to spend the time that I do have up here to answer the question of what do deacons do? And we just read in Acts chapter 6—Taylor read to us—an example of why deacons were created, why the office got instituted. And I want to show you in Acts chapter 6 all the times that the word deacon is actually used. It's really interesting and I think it'll help us answer the question of what do deacons do? And then secondly, how do deacons— And so let's read again.

It'll be up on the screen if you don't have your Bibles. Verse 1 says, "And in those days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution." That word distribution there is actually the Greek word *diakonia*, where we get our English word deacon. They had a ministry to these widows, a deaconing kind of ministry of serving their needs. And so the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples, and they said, "It's not right that we should give up preaching the word to serve tables."

That word "to serve," or "in order to serve," is the Greek word *diakoneō*. It's the verb form of deacon. And so they're talking about—it's not right that we have to give ourselves fully to this ministry when we have another ministry that's a primary ministry which is preaching the word. So they say in verse 3, "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, who we will appoint to this duty. And we're going to devote ourselves to prayer and the *diakonia* of the word."

Again, the word deacon's used, except this time not of deacon ministry, but of pastoral ministry. So there's a little bit of conflation between the two ideas. And so they do that, and it says in verse 5, "What they said pleased the whole gathering, and so they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." They selected Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolaus, who was a proselyte of Antioch, and they set them before the apostles, and the apostles prayed and laid their hands on them.

"And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith." And so what is a deacon? Well, according to Acts chapter 6, we really don't know because it doesn't give us a definition of what a deacon is, but it does give a description of why the deacons were created and what happened as a result of them being ordained by the church. And the reason they were being elected is because there was a practical need in the life of the church that wasn't being met sufficiently just by the apostles alone, and that practical need was feeding the widows.

The New Testament says true religion is taking care of widows and orphans. It was a legitimate biblical need not being met sufficiently by the disciples, by the apostles themselves. And so they say, well, let's pick some more men who can help us meet this legitimate need. And then the result was the congregation was pleased, the ministry of the word increased, and then the size of the church— And so if I was going to take a definition of deacon based on that, this would be my definition. Deacons are servant leaders appointed by the congregation to come alongside the pastors to meet the needs of the congregation, to support the ministry of the word, and to promote the growth of the church.

And you see all seven of those attributes in Acts chapter 6 verses 1 to 7. The word means servant. They're elected as servant leaders. They are appointed by the congregation by selecting them and then commissioned by the laying on of hands. They come alongside the apostles to help with pastoral ministry. That ministry includes meeting biblically defined needs. That ministry includes freeing up time for the apostles to preach and pray, and that ministry resulted with peace in the congregation, growth in the church, and success in the mission. And so if that's what a deacon is, then what do deacons do at Broadview?

Deacons at Broadview come alongside the pastors to help him in meeting important pastoral needs in the life of the congregation so that pastors can give themselves more fully to their

primary responsibility of preaching and the ministry of prayer, and that's how our deacons have historically served, and that's what our deacons, God willing, will continue to do in the life of our church. And for that reason they're a gift to our church. Notice that the deacons do many of the same things that pastors do. I think that's why the qualifications for deacon are almost identical to the character qualifications of a pastor.

You want people who are serving as deacons to when they come to your hospital bed or when they come to help you in a marriage problem or a situation that's going on in your life, you want them to be knowledgeable. You want them to be men of integrity and character. You want them to have great wisdom, be filled with the Holy Spirit, just like your pastor should be all of those things. And so the difference is not at the level of character, the difference is not at the level of intelligence or intellect or spirituality.

The only difference is the type of responsibility that they carry. Pastors have the responsibility to teach and to oversee, and deacons the responsibility to lead through serving. And so I want to challenge you as deacons to be those kind of men, to be men who pastor our church well, who can come alongside of a senior pastor, but who pastor the church well in meeting practical, biblically defined needs. And I would encourage you as a congregation to pray for these men to embrace that role and to flourish in that assignment. It is sometimes an intimidating task.

It's oftentimes a challenging task. It invites criticism at times and they need God's calling on their life to persevere through those challenges and they need the support of their church family to keep them moving in the right direction. The way I want to close is by—we're going to have a time of laying on of hands and praying for these men. And so I wanted to read 1 Timothy chapter 3, the character qualifications of a deacon so that as we pray over these men, I think we'll have them post up right over here in just a minute, but as we pray over these men, it'll give you ways to know how to pray for them.

And so it says in 1 Timothy 3 that deacons "likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience." "Let them also be tested first, and then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded and faithful in everything." And then, "Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well, for those who serve as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

And so I want to give you from this three ways to pray for these men tonight. Those who are being ordained and those who are stepping up who are previously ordained, but they're stepping up into this role. The first is to pray for their character. Pray that these men will be men of integrity who are marked by genuine spirituality. He uses the word dignified, which

means honorable, respectable, esteemed, have a good reputation. You want these guys to have a reputation in our church for holiness. And so pray that they would be protected from the evil one, that they would pursue righteousness, as many of them testified in their testimony, that they have a hunger for the word.

That they spend time with Jesus, that they walk with Jesus, and their life is characterized by it. He says to pray that they're not double-tongued; that just means hypocritical, saying one thing, doing another; not being addicted to much wine, not saying that drinking alcohol itself is a sin necessarily, but the idea of being controlled by it or under the sway of any kind of substance, whether it's alcohol or drugs or pornography, they need to be men who are self-controlled and marked by being filled with the spirit, not filled with literal other spirits.

They need to not be greedy for dishonest gain. Thankfully, our deacons don't make any money, you know, being a deacon—this unappreciated job—but people will sometimes use influence in the life of a local church for sordid gain. And there is a sense in which that's a danger for any of these men. And not just using their Christian influence in the church, but just their influence in society to be men who are not controlled by money nor the love of money but who are controlled by the Holy Spirit and through the way that they spend their money show that they seek first the kingdom above all else.

So pray for their character. Number two, pray for their walk with God. He says two things at this level. He says, pray that their life is transformed by and marked by the gospel when he says, "Let them hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience." The word "mystery of the faith," that's a reference to the gospel. So he's saying, let them be men who know the gospel, men who have their lives changed by the gospel. And men whose lives are characterized by God's love and God's grace in the gospel, that's what it means to be a spiritual leader.

Your life—you're displaying in the way that you live and the way that you speak and the way that you think that God's word has actually changed your life. And then it says, let them be tested and prove themselves. I think that's a reference to their faith as well. It's easy for anybody to kind of live the Christian life for a month or two. It's easy for anybody to serve in the church for a week or two. But what happens when the crises come? What happens when life gets difficult? Do these men check out or do they persevere?

Are they proven and tested and true, or the kind of fair-weather fans? You want to pray that the deacons who are being elected this evening are tested and marked by perseverance and integrity. That they prove themselves blameless. Not that they're sinless, but that they're marked by integrity and they're above reproach even when the crises come. And then the last thing is to pray for their home, pray that they have a godly wife. It says that they should be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in everything. Pray that these men have wives that are not marked by slander or spreading gossip or a lack of self-control, but that

they that they have families and they have a spouse who is supportive, who is godly, who is involved in their ministry in a supportive and helpful way.

Pray that their marriage is marked by oneness as God originally designed. He says that they be husbands of one wife. I personally interpret that to mean not that they have never once been divorced, but that their life as a Christian is marked by marital fidelity and marital oneness according to God's original design. You heard at least one testimony tonight where before they surrendered their life to Christ, they messed up in a prior marriage, but in coming to know Christ and having his life changed by Christ, their marriage to their wife has been, for years and years and years, marked by a fidelity and faithfulness and oneness according to God's design.

And we want each of these men to have marriages that are marked by that kind of unity and oneness and satisfaction. And then they need to lead well in the home, that he would lead his wife and children well because if he can't lead in his home, then he won't have the kind of influence and respect to lead well in the church. When our deacons are marked by that kind of life, you see happen in our church what I think you saw happen in Acts chapter 6, which is the word of God increased, the number of disciples multiplied greatly and a great many number of priests became obedient to the faith.

And you may say, well, of course priests are going to become obedient to the faith, but you've got to remember in the first century Israel or first century Jerusalem, the priests were the least likely people to become Christians because they were Jewish monotheistic religious leaders. And so in our culture, I think what it would look like is men who are far from God, people who want nothing to do with Christianity, because of the life of those kind of men and because of the transformation that the gospel has produced in their life.

They look at that and go, there's something different about them. There's something unique about their faith in this Jesus, and I want what they have in my life as well. And when we have men who lead in that kind of way, in a culture that is dying for a biblical gospel to be preached and demonstrated, then I think we'll see the Lord bring new people to our church, unchurched lost people that'll come to know Christ as a result of their ministry. And so I would charge you as deacons to fulfill the role God has given you.

Become these kind of men. Men marked by righteousness, integrity, mature faith, and vibrant leadership. And I will charge you as a congregation to pray for these men. Intentionally go out of your way to encourage them and let God work his work of grace in their life as you join him through prayer. And so I'm going to invite all ten men up to the front now and—I'm going to read a couple of statements and you're going to say I do and I will, okay? And if you don't and you won't, then you don't need to come up here because it's going to get awkward.

All right. So—you don't have to come on the stage. Y'all just want to line up? No, it's too crowded. Get up here on the stage and we'll do it that way. Plus, this is being recorded, you want to be on the camera. Some of these guys you have not been introduced to. This is Brian Massingill. He was previously ordained in his church before coming to Broadview. Remind me the name of the church one more time. Memorial Baptist. Memorial Baptist Church. Let's see here. Galen Boone served as a deacon in First Baptist Church of Merkel.

Galen and his wife Celeste are—I'm assuming Celeste's here. I don't see her out there, but there she is. Okay. Russell, y'all know Russell, leads our early service traditional worship. He was ordained as a deacon and served as a deacon in many of the churches that he had served years past. What was the church that you got ordained in? First Baptist Merkel. All right. And then this is Greg Wood, whose wife Sherry is here. Greg also ordained. It wasn't Merkel, was it? Lytle South. Lytle South, all right. And so Greg will be stepping in to serve as a deacon, and then these other guys that you've already heard from.

And so some of these are being ordained, some of these guys are just stepping up to serve in our church, and our church again is very blessed to receive them and to commission them into this work. After I ask them some questions, I'm going to ask you as a congregation a question. You've got it on your sheet here, and you'll just affirm with I do or I will. And so, men, do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of all and head of Broadview Baptist Church and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Amen. Do you believe the scriptures to be the word of God, totally trustworthy, inspired by the Spirit, and the supreme, final, and only infallible rule of faith and practice? Will you fully and publicly commit to the responsibilities of this office, knowing the nature, requirements, and duties thereof? And will you fulfill the duties of this office in obedience to Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, for the good of Broadview Church and the glory of God the Father? And will you promote and maintain spiritual unity in our church, proper care of our members, and the continual growth in our mission to be a disciple-making church?

And then will you, as members of Broadview Baptist Church, receive and commission these brothers to serve as deacons? Will you support them in this role, pray for them as leaders, and follow their example as lead servants in the church. All right. Thank you for saying that and thank you, men, for making those commitments. The next thing that we're going to do is have a laying on of hands. And so these four guys who've already served as deacons are going to join the other deacons in our church in praying over these six men who are being ordained tonight.

There just so happened to be six chairs on the—there's not six chairs. One, two, three, four, five. You can add a chair in that middle row and you six guys sit in those chairs. And then if you are a current deacon or you're on this stage and you are a prior deacon, I want you to go and surround them and lay hands on them and pray for them. If you are an ordained pastor

or ordained deacon and you're serving a different church somewhere else, I want you to go over there and lay hands on these men and pray for them.

And then if you are a mom, dad, wife, loved one, kid, whatever the case may be, and you want to pray for the person who means the most to you, I want you to get up and go over there and lay hands on them and pray. And after we've had some time to pray over the life of these men, I'll come up and lead us in a time of prayer. For those of you who don't meet those categories, right there where you're seated, I hope that you will pray for each of these individual men.

We've written their names down on this sheet of paper and you just saw from these passages what you're praying for that they would be marked by those character qualities. And that our church would be marked by the kind of results that having good deacons produces. And so I'm going to ask you men to go down there and sit on those six chairs and those of you who are ordained deacons to go ahead and surround them and start praying for them one by one. And those of you who are ordained deacons in our church, go ahead and make your way over there to those seats.

Parents, wives, children, whoever else you can make your way over there, pray over these men one by one, and the rest of us, we will seek the Lord in praying for these guys. And if you want to start like some music like a hymn or something, background music, that would be nice to kind of fill the noise. After you've prayed for who you're going to pray for, kind of get out of the way so another person can step in and take your place. We've got as long as we need to take, so whoever wants to pray I want you to be able to do so.

[Time of prayer and laying on of hands.]

All right, well thank you for doing that. Let's bow our heads together and pray as a kind of a final prayer of commissioning for these men. And just give you a few moments to say whatever words you're going to say, and then I'll close this out. Father, we thank you for tonight and we thank you for raising up these men, each and every one unique with their own stories, their own spiritual giftings, their own unique passions and abilities, experiences, and perspective and point of view.

You tell us in Ephesians chapter four that every person that is in our church is by your design, that you are the master builder and that you are knitting us and bonding us together, and that when every part is working like it's supposed to work, that you build us up in love and that you help us grow into the fullness of God. And so I pray that each and every one of these men, those who are being ordained tonight and those who are stepping up to serve as deacons in this congregation, that they each would be men full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, and that they would live lives that are full of the fullness of God, and that in them living those lives and us partnering together hand in hand as a deacon body and as a

spiritual leadership, pastors and deacons, that we together might walk in the fullness of God, modeling true, genuine spirituality to the people in our congregation and in leading the way and saying, follow me as I follow Christ, we might all as a church family walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and experience the fullness and the blessing that you want to give to us as Broadview Baptist Church.

We thank you for giving us good leaders who lead well, and we pray that in giving us these men you would keep them and preserve them and bring to completion what it is that you began and are even accomplishing on this night until the day that you get finished. And as a church family we pray that you would give us eyes to see, a heart that is burdened to pray and encourage and support, and a will and a body that is eager to join hands with them, even as they lead in the way, that we would follow after and together seek first the kingdom of God above all else, and allow you, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to take care of building our church.

And we pray these things in Jesus′ name. Amen.