



## “SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH”

### 1 Timothy 3:8-13

#### Part 1

**Theme:** *The ministry of spiritual leadership in the church is so significant God has ordained spiritually qualified men to assist the Overseers.*

**Introduction:** God is genius. His design for relationships is glorious and efficient. In a variety of contexts, He has established partnerships in which different roles exist maximize efficiency and effectiveness. In the home God established fathers who are to serve the family as the “Head of the home.” In partnership to him, God has designed a unique “completer” – a helper suitable to him who will bring the completion what is lacking in the father, the perfect compliment. Fathers and mothers work together to rear the children with each role crucial to the health of the family and the benefit of children. The homes where either the father or mother is absent results in great societal harm – being played out within our culture with blatant cause/effect.

The church is no different. We’ve been looking at the office and qualifications of “overseers,” the elders of the church. These men clearly serve as those who are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the saints in the local church. However, even as God has established a complementarian completion of the father’s role by gifting his wife in such a way to provide a full-orbed ministry to the children, God has established assistants to the overseers whose roles are crucial to the health of the church. These “servants” or “deacons” are spiritually qualified men who are not to be viewed as spiritual leader “wannabes,” but as actual spiritual leaders like the elders. In our text this morning, we see ***“the ministry of spiritual leadership in the church is so significant God has ordained spiritually qualified men to assist the Overseers.”***

- I. The Role of Deacon – 3:8a
- II. The Regard for Deacons – 3:8b
- III. The Restraint in Deacons – 3:8c
- IV. The Reliance of Deacons – 3:9
- V. The Reliability of Deacons – 3:10
- VI. The Relationships of Deacons – 3:11-12
- VII. The Reward for Deacons – 3:13

#### I. THE ROLE OF DEACON – 3:8a

##### A. Understanding the Word

1. As Paul is seeking to provide instruction to stabilize the chaos caused by false teachers gaining influence in the church, he continues to emphasize the role that leadership has.
2. Paul introduces us to another aspect of leadership – servant leaders – or **“Deacons”** [διάκονος] – literally “servants.”
3. Unfortunately, the term **“deacon”** has been misunderstood by many through the history of the church.
  - a) *When I was a boy, my father pastored the Braintrim Baptist Church in Laceyville, PA where I had a difficult relationship with several of the “deacons” of the church (my Dad was the only elder).*
  - b) *In other churches, deacons are a bunch of men who take care of the physical needs of the church – even having this nuance here at Grace until very recently we’ve turned back to the Scriptures for a closer look.*
  - c) *In some churches it is an “honorific” title – a level of spirituality that provides status to the elite servants – those who distinguish themselves in serving others.*
4. The term has a very broad use in the New Testament (used over 100 times) – and unfortunately, has been greatly misunderstood when it comes to our text today.
  - a) *One of the first uses of the term is when Jesus performs His first miracle at the wedding in Cana – John 2:5.*
  - b) *The term is used of women – Luke 4:39; John 12:2; Luke 10:40.*
  - c) *It began a term used to describe even more than being a “waiter” – cp. Romans 13:4.*
  - d) *Any service to Jesus Christ is called a “diakonia” – cp. John 12:26.*
  - e) *There are varieties of ways to “serve” the Lord – cp. 1 Corinthians 12:5.*
  - f) *One can “serve” other saints as well – 2 Corinthians 9:1.*
  - g) *This is the goal of every Christian – to be equipped to do the work of “diakonia” or service – cp. Ephesians 4:12.*
5. We see that the term began as a reference to being a “waiter” and expanded to refer to whatever one does for Christ – cp. Romans 11:13 – even being an Apostle!
6. The same is true of the office of Pastor is called a “diakonia” – cp. 2 Timothy 4:5.
7. To summarize the uses of the term **“deacon”** we need to carefully

recognize the levels of “serving” the word carries:

- a) *First, all Christians are to be engaged in “serving” Jesus as “diakonos.”*
- b) *Second, some Christians are gifted with the spiritual gift of “diakonia” - [Romans 12:7](#).*
- c) *Finally, a few Christians are established in an office of “diakonos” - respected, faithful men who have devoted themselves to serving - cp. [1 Corinthians 16:15-16](#).*

- 8. It is in this last sense the term is used in **1 Timothy 3:8** - and it is a rare use of a description of an “office” of “**deacon**” - cp. [Philippians 1:1](#).
- 9. Generally, the term “**deacon**” is used to describe the activity of people who are doing a variety of tasks to promote the glory of Jesus - evangelizing, preaching, strengthening, edifying, serving, and pastoring ... all to the glory of Christ.
- 10. By the time Paul writes to Timothy, the church has spread, and individual churches had grown up and had been around for 30 years.
- 11. Paul emphasizes that it is necessary that those who are the “overseers” had to be men who were “beyond reproach” but there was more than they could do.
- 12. As a result, Paul here recognizes a second group of leaders who were to serve as assistants seeking to accomplish the spiritual ministries that the elders are identifying, instigating, and inspecting - the deacons are the ones who serve alongside the elders as their spiritually mature and qualifies partners.

## B. Underscoring the Work

- 1. Someone might seek to contest this idea by drawing a hard and fast line between “**deacons**” and elders by appealing to [Acts 6:1-4](#).
- 2. In Acts 6, the men who were chosen are never called “**deacons**” - they are merely called upon to “serve.”
- 3. The attempt to say that this was the birth of “**deacons**” is as near-sighted as attempting to claim the ministry of Martha is the birth of the office.
- 4. The term there and in almost every other New Testament reference is to the general tasks of ministry and not to a particular task assigned to the office of “**deacons**.”
- 5. The “work” of a “**deacon**” is undeclared in the Scriptures and can refer to anything done in the “service” of Christ Jesus.
- 6. When you take the context of 1 Timothy 3:8ff, we note that the role of a “**deacon**” is to serve as the right-hand men of the elders (“assistants”) to

help accomplish the spiritual ministries for which the elders are responsible.

7. It is as though the **“deacons”** exist to make sure the elders are successful in the ministry of the Word and in prayer as their “assistants.”
8. This fits well the atmosphere of the text whereby the elders are called “overseers” – directly “overseeing” the ministries of the **“deacons.”**
9. It is for this reason that the term **“likewise”** [ὡσαύτως] is used here – “in the same way,” the deacons must be qualified to serve as assistants to those overseeing them in the “ministry.”

### **So What?**

1. **Can I be considered a “servant” of Christ in the way I am engaged in the ministry of the Church?**
2. **What can I do to become more of a “servant” of Christ?**
3. **How are the overseers able to rely on me to assist them in the ministry at GBC?**
4. **Those who are in the office of deacon need my cooperation and help, how can I encourage the deacons?**

**Qualified spiritual leaders are God’s men doing God’s work in God’s ways to serve God’s people to the glory of God’s Son.**

## **II. THE REGARD FOR DEACONS – 3:8b**

### **A. The Temperament of Deacons**

1. .

### **B. The Treatment of Deacons**

1. .

## **III. THE RESTRAINT IN DEACONS – 3:8c**

### **A. The Restraint of the Tongue**

1. The
2. .

**B. The Restraint in Temptations**

1. There.

**IV. THE RELIANCE OF DEACONS - 3:9****A. The Reliance on Conviction**

- 1.

**B. The Reliance on Conscience**

1. .

**V. THE RELIABILITY OF DEACONS - 3:10****A. The Testing of Deacons**

- 1.

**B. The Testimony of Deacons**

1. .

**VI. THE RELATIONSHIPS OF DEACONS - 3:11-12****A. The Commitment to Monogamy**

1. .

**B. The Competence with Household**

1. .

**VII. THE REWARD FOR DEACONS - 3:13****A. The Commendation of Deacons**

- 1.

**B. The Confidence of Deacons**

1. .

**So What?**

1. What handles “stick out” in my life and reputation onto which others might take hold?
2. What imbalances exist in my life?
3. In what ways can I become more interested in the truth?

4. Are there ways in which I indulge in anything that would disqualify me from spiritual leadership?
5. If I were to ask someone very close to me: “How can I become more ‘blameless?’” – what would the response would be? ... What should I do about it?

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