

Small Group Discussion + Leader Guide

Sunday - September 20, 2026

Preached By: Matt Alexander

“The Standards for Servants”

Message #6

“Set In Order: God’s Design for His Church” 1 Timothy Series

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Homiletical Bridge:

CIT- Paul provided Timothy with clear qualifications for the office of deacon.

Thesis- Our deacons must meet the clear qualifications provided by the apostle Paul.

Proposition- I want FC’s deacons to meet the qualifications provided by the apostle Paul.

PQ- What are the qualifications for a deacon?

- 1. Character of the Servant** (v. 8)
- 2. Conviction of the Servant** (v. 9)
- 3. Confirmation of the Servant** (v. 10-11)
- 4. Consistency of the Servant** (v. 12)
- 5. Commendation of the Servant** (v. 13)

BEFORE YOU MEET

Encourage group members to read 1 Timothy 3:8–13 before gathering. Ask them to come prepared to discuss what stood out to them from the passage or the sermon.

OPENING QUESTION

(Use this to get the group talking before diving into the text.)

Think of someone in your life — inside or outside the church — whom you would describe as a truly trustworthy servant. What made them stand out to you?

SERMON OVERVIEW

In this sermon, Pastor Matt walked through Paul's qualifications for the office of deacon as recorded in 1 Timothy 3:8–13. The central argument is that God cares deeply about the character of those who serve in recognized roles within His church. The five qualifications Paul outlines are:

1. Character — Can he be trusted?
2. Conviction — Does he know and live the truth?
3. Confirmation — Has his faithfulness been tested?
4. Consistency — Does his Christianity hold up at home?
5. Commendation — Is he serving for Christ rather than for man's applause?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- God's concern for character does not change with the office. Whether pastor or deacon, Christ cares about who a person is before He cares about what a person does.
- The office of deacon does not create a servant. It recognizes one. The title should follow the testimony.

- Biblical conviction is not merely truth you can explain — it is truth you are willing to live.
- A deacon's home life is not separate from his ministry qualifications. The man at church and the man at home should be the same man.
- Faithful service that goes unnoticed by others is never unnoticed by Christ.
- Our ultimate model of servanthood is Jesus, whose greatest act of service was not foot-washing but the cross.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Section 1: Character of the Servant (v. 8)

1. Pastor Matt noted that Paul begins with character rather than ability, popularity, or experience. Why do you think character is the starting point? What problems arise when churches skip this step?
2. The illustration used in the sermon was about giving someone the keys to your house. The first question is not whether he knows how to turn a key, but whether he can be trusted with what is inside. How does that illustration change the way you think about who should serve in leadership?
3. Paul identifies three specific character concerns: speech, appetites, and money. Why do you think these three areas in particular are listed as disqualifying when unchecked? Where do you see these areas tested most in everyday life?

Section 2: Conviction of the Servant (v. 9)

4. Paul says a deacon must hold the mystery of the faith "with a clear conscience." In the sermon, this was compared to a restaurant where the dining room looks impressive but the kitchen is filthy. Where in your own life is there a gap between what you say you believe and how you actually live?
5. Pastor Matt said: "Biblical conviction is not merely truth you can explain. Biblical conviction is truth you are willing to live." What is the

difference between intellectual agreement with the Bible and genuine conviction? How would you know the difference in your own life?

Section 3: Confirmation of the Servant (vv. 10–11)

6. Paul says deacons must be tested first, then serve. The sermon stated: "The office doesn't create the servant. The office recognizes the servant." How does this principle apply beyond formal church offices — to any area of leadership or responsibility?
7. Regarding verse 11 and the discussion of deacons' wives, Pastor Matt said: "Biblical distinction does not mean spiritual insignificance." He also said about Phoebe: "You don't need an office to have enormous gospel influence." How does your group think about the relationship between formal roles and informal but significant gospel ministry? How can your group encourage both?

Section 4: Consistency of the Servant (v. 12)

8. Paul requires a deacon to manage his household well. The sermon asked the group to consider not just how a man serves at church but how he serves at home. Why is the home a more reliable test of Christian character than public ministry settings?
9. Pastor Matt said: "God isn't looking for church character. He's looking for Christian character. Character that follows you home." Be honest with your group: In what areas of your home life does your Christianity show up most clearly? In what areas is it most challenged?

Section 5: Commendation of the Servant (v. 13)

10. Paul promises faithful deacons "a good standing" and "great confidence in the faith" — not money, power, prestige, or popularity. How does this reframe what success in ministry looks like? How does it challenge the way you personally measure your own service?

11. The sermon referenced Hebrews 6:10, which teaches that God does not overlook faithful work done in His name. How does knowing that Christ sees what no one else sees change your motivation for serving in ways that go unrecognized?

Closing Discussion: The Bigger Picture

12. Pastor Matt closed by pointing to Jesus as the ultimate servant, noting that His greatest act of service was the cross. He said: "We don't serve to become Christians. We serve because Christ has saved us." How does the gospel — what Christ has already done — shape the way you approach serving others? What changes when service flows from gratitude rather than obligation?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Work through these individually or discuss as a group. Be specific and honest.

For Every Believer:

- Identify one area of your private life — speech, appetites, finances, or home relationships — where your character does not yet match your public Christianity. Bring it before God this week in honest prayer and repentance.
- Ask yourself: Am I waiting for a title before I begin serving, or am I already faithfully serving in the place God has put me?
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For Those Considering a Role of Service:

- Before pursuing any formal role, ask a trusted friend or family member to honestly assess whether your private life reflects the character Paul describes. Be willing to hear the answer.
- Examine your motivation. Are you drawn to serving because you love Christ and His people, or because you want to be seen and recognized? Bring your motivation honestly before God.

For the Group Together:

- Identify someone in your church or community whose faithful, unrecognized service deserves encouragement. Reach out to them this week and express genuine gratitude for what they do.
- As a group, discuss one practical way you can serve your church body together in the coming month — not for recognition, but as a reflection of what Christ has done for you.

CLOSING PRAYER PROMPTS

Close your time together in prayer, using these prompts to guide the group:

- Thank God for the example of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve.
- Ask God to build genuine character — not merely outward reputation — in each person in the group.
- Pray for the deacons and leaders of your church, that they would be men and women of deep conviction and consistent faithfulness.
- Ask God to reveal any gap between what each person says they believe and how they are actually living.
- Pray for those in the group who may not yet have personally trusted Christ, that they would respond to the gospel.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

1 Timothy 3:13 — *Meditate on Paul's promise that those who serve well gain a good standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Let that promise fuel your service this week rather than the hope of human recognition.*