

I TIMOTHY 3:1-13
QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERS!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Timothy chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of this first letter that Paul wrote to Timothy.

Keep in mind that Paul told Timothy to stay in Ephesus to correct some of the problems that had developed there in the church.

Thus, the focus of this letter is how the church functions!

This letter is part of three letters that are known as the Pastoral Epistles because they were written to pastors. These letters are I Timothy, II Timothy and Titus.

Now we saw in I Timothy chapter 1 the importance of sound doctrine in regard to the health of a local church.

Make no mistake about it, the teaching of sound doctrine was to be the absolute foundation upon which the church was to be built upon.

And if you think about that, it just makes sense. Just as we need to eat healthy to keep our physical bodies in shape; we also need to take in a healthy spiritual diet of the Word of God to stay healthy and strong, spiritually speaking!

Remember what Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:19-20, “**Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.**”

How are we built up in the faith?

By the Word of God, the teachings of the apostles and the prophets who laid down the foundation of our faith and it is all held together by Jesus, the chief cornerstone of our faith.

And that is what we will see here in I Timothy as Paul reminds Timothy, “**but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**” I Timothy 3:15

This is so important for us to understand. Paul is telling Timothy how they should conduct themselves in the house of God and that the house of God is not some entertainment center, but it is “**the pillar and ground of the truth.**”

That means that the Word of God is being taught, because the Word of God is truth. If it is not the Word of God that is being taught, then how do you know if it is truth or not? You don’t and there is the danger, and we see that so much today and thus, because so many Christians don’t know the truths of God found in the Word of God, they accept all kinds of sinful practices into their own lives and into the life of the church!

We have seen in our study of I Timothy chapter 2 that Paul laid down some general guidelines in regard to the conduct of men and women in the church service.

We looked at the men in I Timothy 2:1-8, and the focus was on the importance of prayer and how men should lead the way in regard to prayer.

Then we looked at the command for women in I Timothy 2:9-15 and the focus was on how they were to dress, not trying to draw attention to themselves, and how they were not to be teachers in the sense of being in charge of teaching a congregation. It is not that women can’t teach, but not in the sense of being the pastor and we will see that more this morning in our study!

Here in I Timothy chapter 3 the main focus is the qualifications for leadership in the church.

Now some of you, not being leaders, may be wondering what this has to do with you.

Hear me out on this. When you look at what Paul lists for qualifications for leaders you can easily see these are qualities that should be manifested by all Christians, not just the leadership.

It just makes sense to me. What are you going to say, *“Hey, I’m not a leader so I don’t have to be blameless, I can be greedy, I can be violent and-so-on!”*

Of course you are not going to do that.

Peter tells us in I Peter 1:13-16, **“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”**

Thus, these are lessons for each of us to learn and also lessons of order in the church.

Let me give you some background to set the stage for what we will be looking at in our study this morning here in I Timothy chapter 3.

At the end of Paul’s second missionary journey Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to continue the work.

Then, on Paul’s third missionary journey, we see in Acts 20:31, that Paul spent three years in Ephesus building them up in the faith, raising up leaders in the church.

Now, some 10 years later the leadership is a mess. There is disorder in the church and Paul returns to set things right and he leaves Timothy behind then to finish up the work, as I have said.

Timothy, a young man maybe in his late 30's at this time, is now getting godly advice from Paul on what to look for in leaders, and how important that is.

You see, the church is a living organism and when a living organism is not in order it will die!

The same is true for the church and thus, we have church leadership to help establish organization or order within the church.

Notice what Paul says in Ephesians 4:12-16 regarding leadership in the church and how it is to bring stability, it should build up believers; nourish them in the faith, and-so-on.

Paul tells us that the leadership is **“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”**

Over the years I have learned some hard and valuable lessons about putting people in leadership roles. And one of them is that it is better to wait to put someone in leadership because if you don't and it doesn't work out, it is a lot harder to remove them!

Let me share this with you, it is one pastor's life experience you might say in regard to putting people into leadership positions.

We are told,

I learned early in ministry, and with some pain, to be very careful in respect to the character of those appointed to church leadership. By my mid-thirties, after a little more than a decade in the ministry, I had "seen it all" as to the duplicity [deception] and hypocrisy and immense evil that can exist in church leaders.

I knew a man who was prominent in his denomination and community, a married man with a family, who was discovered to be a practicing homosexual and regularly consorted with several of his male employees.

In another instance the church treasurer appeared in the church narthex [lobby area of the church] on a Sunday morning dead drunk, glass in hand, wildly whispering that he was leaving his wife and family – was departing that day on a private jet for the Middle East!

I have known pious, Bible-quoting, "soul-winning" murderers.

And over the years, while speaking at pastors' conferences, my wife and I have had pastors' trembling wives seek us out and reveal abuse and perversion by their publicly straight-laced husbands – tales that sound as if they were scripted by Flannery O'Connor!

I have said in times of despair that you have never been "had" until you have been "had" by a fellow born-again Christian who calls you "brother."

Am I too cynical? I do not think so. I am a realist who also believes in the power of the gospel to deliver believing, humble, repentant sinners from their sins and instill a nobility of character that the angels admire.

Church leadership can attract people with mixed and sometimes outrightly sinful motives. The seeming prestige of spiritual leadership attracts some. The lure of power draws others. The spiritual directing of others' lives can be heady stuff. Some, I think, like the idea of having access to the supposed mysterious inner workings of the church. All these motives are empty pursuits, but that does not reduce the lure for some.

I say all this to emphasize that Christian ministry and leadership is without question a matter of character. One's authentic spirituality and Christian character is everything in church leadership. It is a sober fact that as goes the leadership so goes the church. . . .

- R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1-2 Timothy and Titus, pp. 77-78

So, as you can see, this is a very important topic and a very controversial one today. And I will say controversial because many people refuse to obey what God has said here in His Word regarding leadership in the church and they have adopted what the culture or society is telling them.

And you know me, it is not the culture or the society that is going to drive me, it is the Lord who is going to guide me.

And here's the thing that we need to remember. The church is not the invention of man but it is the creation of God.

I think we are all in agreement on that.

What that means is that since He is the One who created the church, since He is Almighty God and we are not, He alone has the right to establish how it functions including the roles that men and women are to play in the local church setting.

In saying that it should dispel all the controversy that these verses may bring to some, just as we saw when we looked at the roles of men and women in the church back in I Timothy chapter 2.

Now many of you are new to Calvary and you may wonder what our church leadership is about, how it is structured. So I believe it is important we deal with this so you understand that we try very hard to follow the biblical example for leadership and how the church is to be run or how it is to function.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning in our study of – ***QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERS***, as follows,

PASTORS ARE TO BE – I TIMOTHY 3:1-7

DEACONS ARE TO BE – I TIMOTHY 3:8-13

With that as our background, let's begin reading in I Timothy chapter 3, starting in verse 1, as Paul lays out for Timothy and for us the qualifications for church leadership!

I TIMOTHY 3

VERSES 1-7

Paul opens up with these words, “**This is a faithful saying . . .**” and the idea here is that this is something that stands the test of time, it is something that you can depend upon. It does not change as the culture changes or society changes, and that is important for us to understand!

Also, Paul just spoke of the fact that women are not to hold positions of authority in the church, but in saying that, please do not come to the conclusion that just because you are a man it makes you qualified for a leadership position. Not at all and Paul will expound on that as he lists the qualifications of a bishop and elders!

Let me explain some of these terms for leadership positions, because there is a lot of confusion here.

As I have said, Paul is going to list the qualifications of a “**bishop**” or EPISKOPOS in the Greek.

This word, broken down means “*over*” (EPI) and “*watcher*” (SKOPOS) or an overseer.

And the idea here is that a bishop is a word that is used interchangeably with pastors and elders.

In Acts 20:28 he is called *POIMEN* or shepherd, and again in Acts 20:28 he is also one of the elders in the church or *PRESBUTEROS* in the Greek.

Thus, all bishops (senior pastors) are elders but not all elders are bishops or pastors.

Elders dealt with the spiritual matters of the church, while deacons, as we will see this morning, will deal with the physical matters of the church.

As I have said, many of you are new to Calvary Chapel and you may be wondering about our church government, and how the church is organized.

Before I tell you what we have, let me share with you what we don't have, and you will see why, even though there are many who follow these forms for church government, which, as you will see, can have problems.

CONGREGATIONAL

This was popular in the 1800's but it is still around today. This type of church government came into being to protect against dictatorial pastors and thus, the congregation votes on everything.

They vote on the pastor, the carpeting, the paint and-so-on.

This is the least ideal of the three and I believe it is unbiblical. I can't find any place in the Scriptures where the sheep lead the shepherd.

And here's the thing. The church is not a democracy where the majority rule the church.

It is a theocracy, or it is governed by God and the Lord has placed shepherds in the role to oversee the church. Now if you don't believe the pastor is being guided by God, why are you in that church!

PRESBYTERIAN

This is an elder run congregation where the pastor is just one of the elders, all are equal, all are a vote on the board and majority wins.

This can be difficult if the elders try to tell the pastor what to do, what to preach on because he is hired and controlled by the elders since the pastor only has one vote.

I have seen churches split over this because the elders wanted to go in one direction; for instance, in this one church they wanted the pastor to teach on health, wealth and prosperity. The pastor saw the error in that and refused but he lost 2 to 1 and ended up leaving the church.

In this type of church government I once again don't see this as a biblical form of church government although it can work if you have elders that are good and godly men!

But when you think of a shepherd, it is the shepherd that is in charge of the sheep that has been entrusted to him, not shepherds!

EPISCOPALIAN

In this type of church government, which we have here at Calvary, the pastor is the shepherd of the church, and in Acts 20:28 he is called “**bishop**” or *EPISKOPOS* and pastor or shepherd, *POIMEN*. He is also an elder or *PRESBUTEROS* but he shepherds the church and the elders are there to support him.

Paul, in speaking to these shepherds in Ephesus, said this in Acts chapter 20:28-32, and this is from The Amplified Bible, “**Take care and be on guard for yourselves and the whole flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you bishops and guardians, to shepherd (tend and feed and guide) the church of the Lord or of God which He obtained for Himself [buying it and saving it for Himself] with His own blood. I know that after I am gone, ferocious wolves will get in among you, not sparing the flock; Even from among your own selves men will come to the front who, by saying perverse (distorted and corrupt) things, will endeavor to draw away the disciples after them [to their own party]. Therefore be always alert and on your guard, being mindful that for three years I never stopped night or day seriously to admonish and advise and exhort you one by one with tears. And now [brethren], I commit you to God [I deposit you in His charge, entrusting you to His protection and care]. And I commend you to the Word of His grace [to the commands and counsels and promises of His unmerited favor]. It is able to build you up and to give you [your rightful] inheritance among all God’s set-apart ones (those consecrated, purified, and transformed of soul).**”

You see, a pastor watches over the flock that God has entrusted to him just as a shepherd does his sheep. You feed them, care for them, protect them. That is the heart of a pastor, his love for the sheep!

Now can there be problems when a pastor is in charge, when he is the boss? You bet there can be!

Then how do you keep them in check if they start to go astray?

Here at Calvary, if I started to teach heresy or was living in sin then an elder can talk to me about it but if I refuse to listen and blow them off, then they would go to other Calvary senior pastors and then they would confront me on the issue and they are the ones that can remove me from this position.

And here is why this is so important, this form of church government.

You see, there is the safeguard for me that the elders can't rise up with a coup and try to remove me because they want that position or whatever the case may be.

Also, it is a safeguard for you in case I get weird or something! Okay, I am weird but you know what I mean.

We do see this pattern in the Scriptures, in the Old Testament, (Numbers 11:16-17) where Moses is accountable to God for the whole nation.

He, in a sense was the pastor or the shepherd.

Then there were the priests who dealt with the religious matters. They, in a sense, were the elders.

Next there were the Judges, who dealt with civil matters. They, in a sense, were the deacons who dealt with the physical matters of the church.

And then you had the children of Israel, the sheep.

So I feel that our church form of government is very biblical and I think it does work.

One more point before we move on.

Notice, if you desire this position, if God has placed this upon your heart, that is great.

Here's the thing, Paul says you "**desire a good work**" and that is true.

But this is not some kind of idle position you have. It is 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, even on vacation you can be on call.

For many, they desire money, cars, homes, fame – no that is not correct.

Paul says it is work and if you don't have this calling, don't get into the ministry!

Pastor Chuck would say to the men who were wanting to be a pastor, "***If you can find anything else to do, then do it!***"

It was as if he was discouraging them, and I guess he was. You see, if you feel you can do something else, then don't get into the ministry, do that because it is not going to be easy. You will have your heart broken over and over and over again.

Yes, there are tremendous rewards, but there is a lot of pain involved as well.

Also, Calvin said, "***For it is no light matter to represent God's Son in such a great task as erecting and extending God's kingdom, in caring for the salvation of souls whom the Lord Himself has designed to purchase with His own blood, and ruling the church which is God's inheritance.***"

In Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus tells us what Biblical leadership is about. Notice what He says, “**... ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’**”

In other words, true Biblical leadership is humility, servanthood and sacrifice and it flows out of a relationship with God. And Jesus uses His life as an example for us to follow!

Now Paul goes on and he tells us what the qualifications of bishops or pastors are, and these are true for elders as well as the pastor was also an elder.

And it is interesting because today, we pick leaders for all the wrong reasons. Please understand that leaders are not picked by who has the most money, the most influence, they know someone, because if it is done that way it will be a disaster!

God looks at the heart, which we can't see, and thus, He tells us to look for outward actions that are a reflection of his heart.

Also, please understand that these are not suggestions for leaders, but they should flow from their lives, not that he is 100% perfect, but it is his desire to live according to the standards that God has set for leaders.

And again, this is something all of God's people should manifest in their lives, not just leaders, but leaders *must* exhibit these qualities, these characteristics!

As we read through these verses here in I Timothy chapter 3 we see this list of qualifications for pastors and elders or those who are overseeing the spiritual aspects of the church.

And Paul lists 16 qualifications here in I Timothy chapter 3 and another 6 in Titus chapter

1.

The first is that they are to be – ***BLAMELESS!***

Obviously none of us are perfect but Paul's point is that a leader doesn't have some blot on his life that someone can point to after he is saved.

Next, he is to be the – ***HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE!***

This is better translated "*a one-woman man.*"

What does that mean?

A pastor doesn't have to be married, but if he is, he can't have wandering eyes, he must be faithful to his wife. He can't be a Playboy! Also, if your wife died or you were biblically divorced, you can still be a leader.

A Pastor is also to be – ***TEMPERATE!***

This speaks of a balance, that you are not given over to extremes. You must keep things in perspective and if you don't, your anxiety will affect the sheep that God has entrusted to you.

For some, everything is a disaster, everything is falling apart, and if the shepherd behaves like that, then the sheep will just reflect that nature of the pastor and in that instance, it is not a good thing.

Thus, a pastor needs to be calm and to keep a cool head. He needs to exercise sensible judgment in all things.

A pastor is also to be – ***SOBER MINDED!***

This speaks of a person who knows how to handle situations clearly.

Of this Warren Wiersbe makes this point, *“This does not mean he has no sense of humor, or that he is always solemn and sober. Rather it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel message by foolish behavior.”*

In other words, he should be serious regarding the work that he is doing!

Also, a pastor is to have – **GOOD BEHAVIOR!**

Remember the Jerry Lewis movie, *The Disorderly Orderly*? Well, here the idea is of being in order, respectable, the opposite of that movie!

God is a God of order and not chaos.

Thus, a pastor should be organized in his thinking and in his living, as well as in his teaching and service.

We next see that a pastor is to be – **HOSPITABLE!**

This word literally means *“loving the stranger.”*

They are willing to open their home and their lives up to people.

We actually had a couple who wanted to come to our home for marriage counseling. It was an emergency to them, and they wanted it now. This has been going on for some time, it really was not an emergency.

And we told them we could not get together that evening, it was our anniversary and we were just leaving for dinner. They came over and we counseled them.

And here is one that many don't see as important, but a pastor is to be – **ABLE TO TEACH!**

That should just make sense and yet, we don't see that as important today.

In Nehemiah 8:8 we are told, **“So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.”**

Pastors are to read the Word of God to the people, explain the Word of God to the people and then apply the Word of God to their lives.

We truly need more men that can teach God's Word! If you are a pastor, you are a teacher!

He must "**hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**" (Titus 1:9)

In other words, he must be able to intelligently share his faith with unbelievers as well as to skillfully expound doctrine or instruct from the Word those needing instruction, correction or edification.

We see Paul tell Timothy this very thing in II Timothy 2:15, "**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**"

Another qualification for a pastor is that they are – ***NOT GIVEN TO WINE!***

Does this imply elders can't drink?

No, he can drink as the Greek word here describes a person "***who lingers long beside his wine.***" In other words, he doesn't get drunk!

Personally, I don't drink alcohol because I feel it is a bad example and it can cause someone to stumble. I don't think elders should drink alcohol for their witness to others!

This again seems obvious for the next point, they are – ***NOT VIOLENT!***

A pastor is to have a gentle spirit, able to let things go. A pastor must not be a violent man or one who is ready with his fists. He must be gentle in his demeanor, not contentious or looking for a fight. Again, that should just make sense.

Also, a pastor is – ***NOT GREEDY FOR MONEY!***

Wow, I wonder how many name it claim it, prosperity teachers teach on that one!

I like the way the KJV puts it, “**not greedy for filthy lucre.**”

If you are in the ministry for money, you are in for the wrong reasons.

Paul said in I Timothy 6:6-12, “**Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**”

We see that a pastor is to be – ***GENTLE!***

Think about that one. A leader is not a dictator or Conan the Christian, but he has a gentle spirit towards people as Jesus did. Which leads to the next point.

A pastor is – ***NOT QUARRELSOME!***

There are times you just need to let it go. Some just like to argue. I knew a guy who loved to quarrel, and I think he thought he was being spiritual, but he wasn't. He was just looking to argue. Sometimes you just need to walk away and not add fuel to the fire!

A pastor is – ***NOT COVETOUS!***

And what that means or speaks of is a person who is never satisfied, they always want more, bigger, better. A leader who is consistently dissatisfied is not to be a leader of God's people.

Here is one that many get confused on and that is a pastor – ***RULES HIS OWN HOUSE WELL!***

If you can't manage your own family well, then you can't lead God's family either!

What if a leader has a child that rebels?

That does not disqualify him from leadership unless the rebellion was the result of the parents' lack of discipline.

Also, when a child rebels how is the situation handled? Is it ignored or is it dealt with in a godly way?

You see, a child can rebel in spite of a good job the parents have done, and they are not removed from the ministry because of it.

Look at Adam and Eve, God was their Father and yet they still rebelled!

If a man is going to be a pastor in the church, he must first give evidence through his family that he is a godly leader at home and that his family is following the godly example that he sets.

As one writer put it, ***“An elder must be a man who passionately loves his wife; a man who loves and is devoted to his children, who constantly models for them a life of godliness and integrity. He must first be the spiritual leader of his family before he can be a spiritual leader of God's family.”***

We also see that a pastor is – ***NOT A NOVICE!***

In other words, you don't put a new believer into the ministry; you allow them to grow, mature in the faith.

In our culture a movie star, athlete, musician that gets saved is immediately placed into the spotlight to speak of his faith and that is usually a disaster. Allow them to grow first!

And the same is true as a pastor. They can't be a novice, not that they are ever qualified for the position, but what have they done so far shows they have the qualities to be a pastor.

And lastly, a pastor is to have – ***A GOOD TESTIMONY!***

I believe that the idea here is as unbelievers speak of you, do they do so in a good way, is your life an example of Christ?

Don't live two different kinds of lives, one inside the church that is holy and one outside the church that is far from holy.

That is what a leader's life should be, not perfect but growing.

Paul said in Colossians 4:5, "**Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.**"

William MacDonald shares this insight on walking in wisdom. He wrote, "***The snare of the devil is the trap which Satan lays for those whose lives are not consistent with their profession. Once he has caught men in this trap, he holds them up to ridicule, scorn, and contempt.***"

Many a man has had the reputation of their entire ministry wiped out because they weren't careful and fell into one of the enemy's traps.

Leadership is not easy. In fact, it has been said that Biblical leadership is "***Bent knees, wet eyes and a broken heart.***"

Why is that?

It is because you care for them, you love them!

In Ephesus some of the leadership went astray, they taught heresy and Paul warned Timothy to deal with those who were teaching error and if they needed to be replaced, know the men you were moving into that position!

Again, these qualities should be seen in all of us, but for the pastor, these are the qualifications he must have to be a pastor!

One writer summed up the role of a pastor like this. He wrote,

That is the kind of man God seeks to lead His redeemed people. Such men are ***“those who are willing to suffer for the sake of objectives great enough to demand their wholehearted obedience”*** (Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, 20).

Such a man was Samuel Logan Brengle, one of the early leaders of the Salvation Army. He wrote,

[Spiritual leadership] is not won by promotion, but by many prayers and tears. It is attained by confessions of sin, and much heart searching and humbling before God; by self-surrender, a courageous sacrifice of every idol, a bold, deathless, uncompromising and uncomplaining embracing of the cross, and by an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus crucified.

It is not gained by seeking great things for ourselves, but rather, like Paul, by counting those things that are gain to us as loss for Christ. That is a great price, but it must be unflinchingly paid by him who would be not merely a nominal but a real spiritual leader of men, a leader whose power is recognized and felt in heaven, on earth and in hell. (The Soul-Winner’s Secret [London: The Salvation Army, 1918], 22)

The call to lead the church is so important that only the noblest need apply.

- John MacArthur – I Timothy 3

I agree and I can tell you that it truly is a humbling experience to be your pastor and thus, I ask for your prayers!

And let me also say this. These are the qualifications for elders as well, since a pastor was an elder. They too need to have these standards in their lives.

And an elder is there to assist in the work of ministry, to take some of the work off the pastor so he can focus on teaching the Word of God and prayer.

Now we will move on to the role of deacons or – ***DEACONS ARE TO BE!***

VERSES 8-13

Here are the qualifications of a deacon or ***DIAKONOS*** in the Greek.

The word literally means “***one who serves.***”

Now you may be thinking, “***I thought we are all servants of Christ!***”

That is true, we all are called to be servants in the church. But this role is different in that this group of people hold the office of leadership within the church, they are overseeing these ministries as well as being involved in them.

And what these men dealt with were the physical matters of the church, setting up the chairs, cleaning the sanctuary, ushering, sound ministry and-so-on.

An example of the appointment of deacons is in Acts 6:1-6, where the apostles saw the need to distribute the daily assistance to the widows among the church, and yet, they did not have the time to distribute the aid themselves.

What they did was they chose men to act essentially as deacons in that church.

This is what we are told of what you might say were the first deacons in the church, **“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.”**

Like the elders, they are there to assist in the work of ministry, to help the pastor out so he does not have to do these things.

Now, for many, they don’t see this as important as a pastor role or even an elder role, but it is!

How do I know that?

Because, like the pastor and the elders these deacons are also accountable; you don’t just make someone an usher because there is a need, but because they fulfill the requirements of being a deacon!

What are these requirements?

Paul lists them for us.

The first qualification for deacons is they must be – ***REVERENT!***

Think about that for a minute. If you don't show proper respect towards those who are leaders in the church, then you are dishonoring God and you can't be a deacon!

I actually had someone in the sanctuary say, while I was teaching, "***Heresy***" because he did not agree with what I was teaching. It was not loud enough for me to hear, but it was loud enough for those who were around him to hear. That is not showing proper respect.

If you disagree with what I am saying, that is not how you handle it!

And again, by your actions you are not honoring God. We saw that with Aaron and Miriam who wanted better positions like Moses had. And by their actions, yes, they were coming against Moses' leadership, but they also were coming against God who placed him in that position!

The next qualification is that they are – ***NOT DOUBLED TONGUED!***

What does that mean?

It means that he must be a man of his word!

In other words, let your yes be "***Yes!***" and your no be "***No!***"

Speak the truth, don't try to deceive people or you can't be a deacon!

I have also seen this where someone is nice to me when we are together, but behind my back, they say nasty things about me. That is being double tongued!

The third qualification for a deacon is that they are – ***NOT GIVEN TO MUCH WINE!***

We saw this with the pastors and elders, that they are not to get drunk. It is not saying that you can't drink but be careful because your witness is on the line!

The fourth point in regard to the qualifications of a deacon is that they are – ***NOT GREEDY FOR MONEY!***

In other words, don't use your position for your own gain – like an usher who is handing out his business cards as people are coming into the sanctuary!

The next qualification for a deacon is that they are – ***HOLDING THE MYSTERY OF FAITH WITH A PURE CONSCIENCE!***

And you are probably thinking, ***“What in the world is that all about?”***

Keep in mind that many of the doctrines of Christianity were kept secret during the Old Testament times. These prophets wrote about these things, but they did not fully understand them.

But why this word **“mystery”**?

This word does not mean you can't understand it, but it speaks of not understanding it through human wisdom. These are the deep things of God that are opened up by the Spirit of God!

You see, as we come to the New Testament these things that were once hidden are now opened up to us. I will share with you a few points regarding the mysteries that were hidden and are now revealed to us. They are,

The mystery of the incarnation – I Timothy 3:16.

The mystery of the indwelling of Christ in believers – Colossians 1:26-27.

The mystery of the saving Gospel – Colossians 4:3.

The mystery of the rapture of the church – I Corinthians 15:51-58.

And the mystery of lawlessness – II Thessalonians 2:7.

And thus, as we read these things they are to be applied to their lives. They are to live what they say they believe!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 1:12, **“For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.”**

In other words, deacons must understand Christian doctrine and obey it with a pure conscience.

The sixth qualification for deacons is that they must be – ***TESTED!***

This means that they should be observed for some time and perhaps even given some minor responsibilities in the local church. Just like elders they are not put in that position because there is a need or anything else except that you see the hand of God upon their lives to place them in this position.

And as they serve as deacons, God may be placing them in other positions within the church. Many deacons have gone on to be pastors, you are looking at one!

The seventh qualification for deacons is that they are to be – ***PROVED BLAMELESS!***

Like the pastors and elders they are not to have some big blot in their life.

The next qualification for deacons is that – ***WIVES ARE NOT SLANDERERS, THEY ARE TEMPERATE, THEY ARE FAITHFUL!***

I believe that this is for pastors, elders and deacons in that when God calls a husband into a ministry, He is also calling the wife to support him in the work.

What do I mean by that?

Here in I Timothy 3:11 we see what the wife of a decan and really and elder is to be like!

The wife of a deacon is to be **REVERENT!** She must not only show respect to the leadership, but she must live in such a way that others respect her.

She is not to be a **SLANDERER!** In other words, she is not to be gossiping about others or passing on information that can hurt a person or even false information that is given to put someone down.

She is also to be **TEMPERATE!** The idea here is that she must exhibit self-control. She must be able to control her tongue and show restraint in situations!

And she must be **FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS!** The wife of a deacon must be faithful, they must be dependable, they must be loyal, they must show discretion and their commitment to God is seen in how they treat others!

I am very blessed to have a wife that has supported me in the work of ministry for the last twenty-eight years. She has been my encourager, my helper, my supporter and so much more.

But I also want you to understand that she is not co-pastor. In regard to the church, she is like all of you in that if she wants to do something in the church, she needs to bring it to me first.

I realize that some of you think Julie just does whatever she wants. No, the buck stops here with me and the wonderful thing is that her heart is that of a servant and what she asks me about are things to bless the women of this church. She fulfills this role of what a godly wife is all about!

The next qualification for a deacon is that he is to be a – **HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE!**

And we talked about this when we looked at pastors and elders and the idea is that he is “*a one-woman man*” or that his eyes are not wandering!

And the last point in regard to the qualifications of a deacon is that he – ***RULES HIS OWN HOUSE WELL!*** Again, if you can't take care of your own house, how can you care for God's? You can't!

I find it interesting that even those that care for the physical well-being of the church. are held to a high standard for they are representing God in all that they do!

And really, these qualities are for all of us to follow, but especially for deacons here.

And Paul closes with a blessing for these deacons in I Timothy 3:13, as he wrote, **“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”**

Why does Paul give this blessing to the deacons?

I believe it is because, in our society, the more menial the task the less honor is given.

God does something different and says that all are important, not just the elders that deal with the spiritual matters of the church, but also the deacons who deal with the physical aspects of the church.

God is interested in faithful service and that is how He rewards!

The blessing here is they will be respected and given great confidence in the faith. You see, if you serve God faithfully, see His power and grace at work in your life; you will have a passion for even more service unto Him!

As Paul gets done speaking of the qualifications for pastors, elders and deacons, do you know what he speaks of next? We don't have to guess, and we will look at this next time, how we are to conduct ourselves in the church.

And I will leave you with this as Paul wrote, “**These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**” I Timothy 3:14-15.

Lord, help us to be all that you want us to be so that we may bless the people and glorify you!