

The Nature of the Leadership We Need Pt 2

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Spiritual Authority

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We've been looking at this issue of leadership. It's something that, though we might not choose to want to think about it or it's not something high on our list, God believes it's important and he gives great emphasis on this in the New Testament. We saw in this series of messages, the first message a few weeks back was the blessing of spiritual authority, that God works through authority. Then we talked about, the second message was the paradoxical nature of spiritual authority, that though the ground is level at the foot of the cross, we're all equal in Christ, there's neither male nor female, slave nor free, all are one before Jesus Christ, yet he has ordained his church in such a way that there still is authority. He works through spiritual authority and it's essential for our well-being in all areas of life, family, government, and the church. God is not a God of disorder and anarchy. He's a God of order and authority. And then we began last week looking at the nature of the title of the message last Sunday, was the nature of the leadership we need and we looked at 1 Timothy 3:1 to 7, and looked at what the elder qualifications are, that God intends the church to be led by elders and deacons, to be led by officers that can model for us what Jesus Christ is like. Remember, we noted that these two offices that are clear in the New Testament, elder is basically another way of saying shepherd. The shepherds are the elders. The deacons are the servants. And so you have shepherds and you have servants as leadership for the church and that's because Jesus is the chief shepherd and he's also the servant of God, the ultimate servant of the Lord. And so you think about this, the offices God has put in the church are there to say, this is what it means to shepherd, this is what it means to serve, and so both offices essentially say to the rest of the body, "Follow me as I follow Jesus." The servants serving like Christ, the shepherds shepherding like Christ.

And we come to this passage again this morning, 1 Timothy 3. We're going to focus in on verses 8 to 13 today to look at the nature of...the title is the same, "The nature of the Leadership We Need," part two. Last week we looked at the nature of leadership we need among elders. This week, the nature of leadership we need from deacons, verses 8 to 13. We're going to start reading in verse 8, but we're going to read all the way to the end of the chapter to help set the context again. 1 Timothy 3:8,

8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 but holding to the mystery

of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. 13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. 14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; 15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we praise and worship You because You are the one true God. There is no other. We rejoice that You, though You are a God of infinite majesty, indescribable glory, we are so small and yet You have deemed it worth Your while to speak to us and to give us Your holy word in which you reveal to us Your glorious character, Your righteous ways, and the supreme expression of Your goodness, Your Son, who made known to us all that You are. We pray that You would bless us now as we study Your word. Help us to order our lives accordingly. We come in need of grace as sinners, always crying out as we prayed earlier, have mercy on me, the sinner. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

The nature of the leadership we need. The New Testament makes clear that you and I need leadership. We just do. We may not think we do. In fact, it's likely that we don't because our primary problem in the essence of sin is we overestimate our own abilities continually. We judge ourselves by our intentions, others by their actions. That is, if we intended something, we have a high regard for ourselves. Well, we know we meant differently. But other people we judge by their actions, not their intentions. And we certainly don't see ourselves as we ought to before God. And so we come to Christ, when we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, by embracing the gospel, by accepting his assessment of us in his word that we are, all of us, sinners without hope in and of ourselves, and we accept, though, his provision that Jesus Christ is a savior of sinners, that he has lived a perfect life, tempted in every way yet without sin, he offered himself as an atoning sacrifice, his blood shed to pay for the sins of everyone who would ever believe, dying in our place, he gives us his righteousness. So you come to Christ and you are made new. Old things pass away, behold, all things become new. You have a new heart. And yet, even with that new heart, you and I need to be under authority.

That's the paradox of spiritual leadership we talked about a few weeks back. We need leadership. Every one of us needs to be led. That's why even among the elders, we understand that we are all under leadership. We're all to be led. And in reality, there's always a sense in which every other believer, every believer is subject in some sense to

every other believer, when that believer brings the word of God to you, that is that you can come to me as the pastor or any of the elders, and you can share with us your concern from the word of God, and we are to submit ourselves to you as you speak the word of God truly and rightly. We heard earlier, everyone who humbles himself will be exalted, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. Christians are the people who have learned and are learning humility to humble ourselves before one another.

What's important to consider also, just to understand Paul's urgency in writing, I want to take a few moments to talk to you about the letter, 1 Timothy. Paul writes this letter around 63 AD. Interestingly, it's contemporaneous to Peter's letter that we're looking at when we get back there, Lord willing, in a few weeks, that he wrote to the churches in Asia Minor, Asia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, all of that. Well, Ephesus is actually in the province of Asia and so Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus. Peter was writing a general letter to a bunch of churches all over those areas, among which Ephesus was one. And so, the same circumstances that I've been talking about in that exposition of 1 Peter, that the churches in Asia and Bithynia and Cappadocia and Galatia and Pontus are experiencing, are the same circumstances the people to whom Paul writes are experiencing. They're about a year out from a major outbreak of persecution. They are experiencing increasing opposition from the outside, increasing spiritual hostility, social animosity. It's hard to be a believer in Ephesus. And what Paul is even more concerned about, though, as you read the letter of 1 Timothy carefully, is it's not just opposition from the outside, it is enemies within that have also beset the church at Ephesus and Paul's great burden, in fact, if you turn back over to 1 Timothy 1:3, look at this, 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul's writing to Timothy, the pastor, that's why the letter's called 1 Timothy, it's written to the man, not the church of Ephesus, to the man, Timothy. 1 Timothy 1:3, "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith." Basically, "Timothy, you know I left you there to make sure those false teachers are silenced."

There were already false teachers. Really amazing. Paul spent three years in Ephesus from 53 to 56 BC. That's when he evangelized Ephesus 53 BC to 56. 57 BC, he's in Miletus, he sends for the Ephesian elders. He's left Ephesus in 56, gone away strengthening churches back in Macedonia. On his way back to Jerusalem, he sends for the elders of the church, Acts 20. They come to Miletus to meet with him, and he urges them to, "Be on guard for yourselves and the flock. Watch out because after my departure, savage wolves will come in, teaching strange and perverse doctrines to draw away disciples after them." One of Satan's great strategies is false teaching in the church. From the very beginning, I mean, right at the beginning of the church, he's doing it and this is still his modus operandi. This is what he does. He counterfeits and deceives. And so, Paul's there for three years. Imagine that, that's the longest ministry we know the Apostle Paul had in all of his itinerant missionary ministry. Three years in Ephesus. You would have thought they would have been more immune but they weren't.

And so, even with that extra message that Paul calls them to Miletus, "Be prepared." 57 AD. Paul is in prison from 60 to 62. He gets out in 62 AD and he and Timothy go to

Ephesus, and they find that things are just as bad as they'd heard. Five years after his last time with them, false teaching has filled the church and so he immediately takes action, and he exercises church discipline on two of the ringleaders of the false teaching. If you look at verse 18 of chapter 1, "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme." He's saying, "I handed them over." This is almost identical to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, he has disciplined them out of the church because these men would not repent of their false teaching. 2 Timothy 2:17 or 14 to 17, Paul talks with this guy Hymenaeus again and explains the doctrine that he was teaching was that the resurrection had already happened. He's saying that basically Jesus has already returned, that there is no bodily return of Jesus in the future. He's totally upsetting the whole gospel by his teaching.

So Paul puts him out of the church and one thing I want to comment on because it's going to come up in the message a little later, he says, "fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience." Keeping faith is a way of saying keeping your faith in the doctrine you have been taught, the established doctrine of salvation, and you guard that faith and also maintain a good conscience. Now, a good conscience, the conscience is your self-awareness. It's knowledge that you have together. It's actually the way the word works. It's knowledge together and it comes to mean your self-awareness, and a good conscience means to have a sense of your judgment of yourself morally conforms to reality, and you're calling sin, sin in yourself and you're fighting sin. So, a good conscience is someone who their life is matching their doctrine. So, he's saying, "Pay attention to your doctrine. Pay attention to your life." Paul is saying to Timothy, "You make sure you do that." And you're going to see that's going to come up again for the rest of the leadership.

So I'm bringing this up because the situation is perilous in Ephesus. I mean, pressure from without, enemies within. How's the church going to make it? And that helps you then understand the importance of 1 Timothy 3:1 to 13. Paul spends 13 verses talking about the kind of leaders that you need. You see, the whole problem was you had bad leaders. You had leaders who were not committed to Christ and his gospel. They seemed to be. They apparently were. But if you looked a little closer, their life did not match their doctrine. They didn't have a good conscience, and so they shipwrecked their faith. And if you looked carefully at their doctrine, their doctrine was not sound either. One of the best ways you can recognize false teachers is look at their life. Jesus said the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7, he says, "How will you know the false prophets and false teachers?" He says, "A good tree produces good fruit. A bad tree produces bad fruit. You will know them by their fruits. Do you see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Or do you see lust, greed, selfishness, pride, unteachability? If you see those things, those are not the mark of a man with a good conscience."

So it's urgent for the church to have leadership that is like this, Paul says, and so he spends seven verses talking about the overseer, the elder, the shepherd we talked about. Those three words all are the same word in the New Testament, they mean the same

office. Three different words for the same office. Then in verses 8 to 13, he's turned the corner to talk about the second major office, the office of deacon and he's going to do the same thing. We're going to see there's 9 qualifications. I'm listing it as 9. You may say 12. You could say 7 or 8. You'll see as we go through it, there's some debatable, how do you call that one, anyway. You'll see as we go. I'm saying 9. So follow along with me. In the outline, there'll be 9 subpoints on one point and what you're going to see is in these 9 qualifications, they are all about character. All 9. Nothing about skill.

Here again, as we saw last week, the job description for the office is almost an afterthought. The requirements are character. That's because being is before doing. Who you are precedes what you do. The Lord seems to say, "Get the right man and then he will do the job." It recalls Acts 6:3, which I think is the prototypical or the birth of deacons, I really believe is clearly there in Acts 6. Some people disagree with that, and I respect that, but I think it's given so that we would see the birthplace of the diaconate. And in Acts 6:3, they're told that the Lord working through the apostles, the 12 says, "Choose for yourselves seven men," and he gives three qualifications for these men, "men of good reputation, full of the Spirit, full of wisdom." Three character qualities. Not three men who are skilled in administration. Three men who are really shrewd businessmen. We've got to handle money, we've got to work things out. Now that's important, but it's secondary. It's so secondary that God doesn't even mention it in the text. Doesn't mean we don't do it. In fact, one of the things we're working hard to do right now in our church among the elders and staff and deacons is we're working on, we're actually working on our job descriptions and stuff, but we know that the most important thing is character. Get the right men for the job.

Now, that said, we need leadership like this. So the nature of the leaders that we need, we're now ready to get into the outline. There's two main points and it's similar. Last week, we noted that elders, last week, the two points were a noble work. The points last week, a noble work and a worthy walk. This week, the way that Paul deals with it is a worthy walk is what he talks about deacons first, and then he's going to basically say, so the points this week are a worthy walk and a mighty work so that the main points are in the middle about character, but it's interesting that he starts off the whole discussion with it's a noble task that a man desires to do when he talks about the overseer in verse 1. He aspires to the office. It's a noble work he desires to do. He talks about the greatness of the work. He ends with the greatness of the work of the deacon and says it in such a way that's actually startling in its elevation of the office because we tend to think of the deacon as a second class office because there is a sense in which the elders are over the deacons. You see that in Acts 6. They choose seven men "whom we will appoint for the task." You see, the 12 were over the seven. The 12 apostles representing elders over the seven deacons. But here you see, we're going to see the office of deacon is given great honor by the Lord and should be held in great honor by the church.

Now that said, a worthy walk is the first point. A worthy walk. How do you recognize the men for the office of deacon? They need to have a worthy walk. Nine sub points here. Nine character qualities. Verse 8, "Deacons likewise must be men of dignity." It's the first sub point: a man of dignity. Other translations say "dignified; worthy of respect." The

word translated here means someone who inspires reverence, that it's someone who actually you just naturally respect and it's rooted in their own reverence. You're reverent for people who are reverent themselves. This is a man who recognizes this solemnity of life, the seriousness of life, and he lives his life before God, there's an element of fear of God before this man and that then results in people seeing that, sensing that, and that's what he's talking about here. Men of dignity. You're going to see a lot of these character qualities look a lot like the elders' qualifications but God wanted us to hear two separate lists so we could hear instead of just hearing 15 qualifications of an elder, we'd hear 24 qualifications, elder and deacon and character would be hammered like a hammer hitting a nail, and hitting a nail, and hitting a nail, and hitting a nail. So do we get the point? Men of dignity.

Secondly, second subpoint here: not double-tongued. The NIV says "sincere." Literally in the Greek it's *dilogos*. Two words. So it's really double-tongued is a good translation. Very literal. To say one thing to one person and say something entirely different somewhere else. Deacons must not be the kind of person who will say one thing to someone and something different to someone else. There must be a consistency, a oneness about their speech and how they speak about things. They must be trustworthy in their speech. Not liars, not exaggerators, not people who are pleasing people to the point that they don't speak the same both places.

The third point, subpoint under a worthy walk, is they're not addicted to much wine. Verse 8, not addicted to much wine. It's interesting again that just like in the elder qualification, the offices don't require abstinence, they require moderation. I think many believers and leaders will choose to abstain, but the text does not require it and we should not go beyond the text. And so it is a liberty that, of course, would always be used in a way to honor the Lord. Not addicted to much wine. They would be men who can think clearly. They're not affected in their judgment.

Fourth subpoint: they're not fond of sordid gain. ESV says, "not greedy for dishonest gain." They're not men who are willing, so eager to make money that they're willing to do dirty things for it is the idea of this word here in the Greek. They're willing to get their hands dirty to make money. That's not a deacon. A deacon has a cleanness about the way he handles money. He's not a lover of money as Paul's going to talk about in 1 Timothy 6 when he says, "The love of money is the root of all evil," the root of all sorts of evil, all kinds of evil. It's not money itself, but the love of money that is the root of those things. And so the deacon is not someone who loves money and is controlled by the love of money. This makes sense because deacons are going to handle church financial resources. They need to be clearheaded in this area and godly, submitted to the Lord.

Fifth qualification, character qualification, is found in verse 9: but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. Holding to the mystery of the faith. They have a firm grasp of the faith, that is the doctrines of salvation, the doctrines of Christ, the doctrines of the atonement. They understand the faith and they have a clear grasp of it. The mystery of the faith, remember the word "mystery" in the New Testament is not used the way we use it in modern English, a mystery is something that you can't figure out, it's something that's hidden. In the New Testament, a mystery is something that was formerly hidden but

is now made known. It's no longer hidden and secret, it's made known, but there's still an element about which it's made known by those who humble themselves before God and who have the Holy Spirit, still veiled in many ways to unbelievers. But they hold to the mystery of the faith means that a deacon is not just someone who's going to be doing practical ministry and they just know how to do practical stuff. They have a firm grasp on the things of God. Firm grasp on the essential core doctrines.

And they hold those doctrines firmly with a clear conscience. Literally in the Greek, a clean conscience. That's why I spent time at the beginning talking about this. It's something Paul spends a lot of time on. In fact, in 1 Timothy 1:5, he brought up a good conscience. The goal of our instruction, this is back when he's explaining about false teachers, verses 3 and 4 of 1 Timothy 1. We read that earlier. "As I urged you," in verse 3, "upon my departure, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith," rather than furthering the kingdom of God which is by faith, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." He's basically saying, "Listen, when people are all preoccupied with minutiae and speculative kinds of things, like endless genealogies and myths and speculations, that's not from God." God is interested in making known to us the wonder of what Christ has done so that we will have love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. God wants to see life change happen, and that happens when we're focused on these things.

So he said good conscience there. We saw in verse 18 and 19 that Hymenaeus and Alexander had rejected a good conscience. And here he comes back to conscience again in chapter 3, verse 9 with the deacons. It's so important that our life match our doctrine. Now, there's never a 100% match. We tend to have, someone has coined this idea, we have our functional theology and we have our stated theology. Our stated theology is what we say we believe. Our functional theology is how we live. And every Christian, there's a gap between their functional theology and their stated theology, because you never live consistent with what you truly believe. But the gap should be closing over time. It shouldn't be widening, or it shouldn't be staying on parallel lines. If that's the case, that man does not have a clear conscience and should not be a leader in the church.

So it's hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. The sixth next point is in verse 10, "These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach." So this one would be beyond reproach is the idea, but it's having been tested. This word "test" means "to examine and scrutinize." It means "to give great sense of focus and investigation." So we are called as a church to examine and scrutinize the candidates for these offices.

Now the elders take that seriously and we make this a serious part of what we do. We interview elder/deacon candidates on the front end. We interview their wives. We ask a lot of hard questions. We then put them through training. And at the end of that, we interview them again, and we look at them and consider are they ready. But the church also has a responsibility, the church as a whole, and so one of the things we're going to do with the candidates that are nominated is you're going to have an opportunity to hear

from them, their testimony, elder candidates you'll hear teach, and you have an opportunity to ask questions and examine them because that's what God says we're supposed to do.

The idea is you test them, examine them, and beyond reproach means there's nothing that you can call them out for. Literally in the Greek, it's not called out. There's nothing pointing to say clearly there's something wrong there. You examine them. It doesn't mean they're perfect. No, it's not the perfection of your life. It's the direction of your life. But there's no obvious area where there's not positive direction. Above reproach.

So we said men of dignity, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not fond of sordid gain, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, above reproach, and then seventh, we have to skip down to verse 12: husbands of one wife. Husband of one wife. "Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children." The wording here is identical to what we see in verse 2 of this chapter when we saw, "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife." And so the discussion is the same as last week. We said it's not so much about forbidding polygamy, that wasn't really a big problem in the first century. It's not so much about trying to say that if someone's widowed and they marry again, they can't be a deacon. Or it's not saying they have to be married. When we let the rest of Scripture interpret Scripture, we bring things to bear, we realize there were men of God who were not married. Paul, noted example. Jesus, of course. And others. But it seems to be saying the emphasis of this passage is to say investigate carefully anything in their former married life, in their family life, look into it carefully. And so if someone has been divorced, it's an area that needs to be scrutinized very carefully. Were they divorced biblically? That is, did their spouse leave them in an ungodly way or did it happen well before conversion? And that's something that has to be carefully looked at and scrutinized.

But I think the qualification is actually getting at something that's even higher than exactly what are the circumstances if someone's been divorced or not. It's saying whether a man's been divorced or not, he must be a, remember last time, a one-woman man. That's literally what the Greek says. Husband of one wife, the word "husband and wife" in the Greek are interchangeable. The word for "husband" can also be translated "man," and it just depends on context. The word for "woman" could be translated "wife." I mean, the word for "wife" could be translated "woman" just as easily. And so it means a one-woman man. It means a man who's devoted to his wife. Faithful to his wife. Loves his wife. His marriage relationship is exemplary. That's what we're talking about here and the way he carries himself in that area of life is pure.

So husbands of one wife. Then finally, or not finally, the eighth point is in verse 12 as well: good managers of their children and their own households. So good managers of their home. So I'm calling that number 8. These two are dealing with family life, aren't they? 7. Husband of one wife, one-woman man. 8. Good manager of children and the household. This means leader. He's leading his family well. It doesn't mean that everything's going to work out perfect, they're going to follow perfectly, but he's leading in such a way that he's doing it the way God would have him do it. There's a sense of godly leadership going on and things are under control. That's the eighth, verse 12.

Now, I'm making number 9 a verse we skipped over, verse 11, and I'm calling this one qualification, a godly wife. Deacons must have a godly wife. They have to have a worthy walk, and their wife does too. Verse 11, "Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things." I mentioned the word "wife/woman" is interchangeable. The same word here. You may have a footnote in your Bible, mine does that says it can be translated "wives" because it's the same word "gyne" is in certain context "woman," in certain context "wife." Same Greek word "gyne." And so, this is basically the question as you read this is, is this talking about women deacons or is it talking about the wives of deacons? Now, this is a debated issue and is debated by many godly people. I mean, this is one where we would have, our church's position would be different than a lot of churches we have great respect for. And I mean, I can see a good argument for the other side, though I think I'm going to share with you why we believe that this is speaking of wives of deacons and not women deacons. But I just want you to be clear that it is certainly more debatable than a lot of points in Scripture. And the first thing is to consider it in the immediate context.

"Women must likewise be dignified." One of the things that jumps out and argues against it being female deacons to me is the fact that it's inserted in the middle of the instructions to male deacons. Why put that in the middle? I mean, why not finish with male deacons and then go to deaconesses? Why talk about male deacons and then talk about female deacons and then go back to male deacons? Does that make sense? It seems much more logical that you're talking about the deacons, the men who lead, and you happen as you're going along the way to talk about this qualification, "Hey, you need to look at their wives as well." We just talked about testing and examining, you also have to look at their wives. That'd be the first point. The immediate context seems to argue for that.

Then I think the broader context argues even more powerfully. We have to remember to read the Bible in context and so you look at this question, 1 Timothy 3:11, we ought to look at what Paul says other places in Timothy. Look back maybe on the same page of your Bible, it is mine, to 1 Timothy 2:9 to 15. This should speak and inform how we answer the question, is this women deacons or is this wives? 1 Timothy 2:9. Now what's happening in 1 Timothy 2 in general is Paul is talking about how worship needs to be conducted. In chapter 2, verse 1, he says, "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men." I want you to spend time in worship praying. In verse 8, he comes back to that again, verse 8, "men in every place lifting up holy hands to pray without wrath and dissension." The men are to be committed to prayer, this is what you're supposed to do. So the role of the sexes in Christian worship, how do we relate? What are the roles of men? What are the roles of women? Men need to be men of prayer and women, verses 9 to 15, he's talking specifically about women and how they relate in the body of Christ. Verse 9, "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments." 1 Peter has a similar passage like that in 1 Peter 3 and the idea seems to be, Paul is saying not necessarily that he's forbidding the braiding of hair or jewelry, but he's saying be very careful, make your adornment not about the external, make your adornment about the internal person of the heart. This is what he says in 1 Peter 3, I encourage you to read that, verses 1 to 6. We don't have time to go there today,

but he's saying so they need to be clothed modestly and in discretion. They don't need to be trying to draw attention to themselves and their appearance by over concern on externals. It doesn't mean that they're not to wear makeup, some people take it to that level, I don't think the Bible is teaching that when you look at it all carefully. It's just saying don't make your major emphasis your outward appearance.

In fact, 1 Peter 3 makes this even clearer, "a gentle and quiet spirit," listen to this, "a gentle and quiet spirit on the part of a woman is precious in the sight of God." What that says is, don't you want as a woman to adorn yourself in such a way that your heavenly Father delights in you? To be beautiful to God is to understand this, to reign in appropriately. I mean, God's made women to be beautiful, the fairer sex is accurate. And I think when you look at all of Scripture, the Bible comments on beauty in a positive way. It's not a bad thing, it's not a bad thing at all. I mean, God talks about Rachel, she was really beautiful, Leah, not as much, right? And this is the reality, God gives us what he gives us, right? We all would like to change things about ourselves, right? We wish, you know, as guys, you wish you were taller, you wish you were stronger, you wish you were faster, you wish you had a better mind, whatever. And ladies can think, well, I wish I had this or that, or we all have things that we wish were different but what we all need to come to is God is the one who knits you together in your mother's womb, and he made you exactly the way he wanted you. This is what David is saying, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." I may not like it, I might wish God had done something different about this or that, but I will not resent it. I will instead praise God that he's made me exactly as he's made me and I will try to take what he's given me and order it in such a way that my life, my character most of all, but even my appearance, my appearance frames my character. And I think that's a good way to think about it. Our external appearance needs to be thought of like a frame. A frame is not unimportant. You have a beautiful picture, you don't just throw up some ugly frame on it. The frame is important, but if the frame takes away from the picture, that is a problem. That's what God's saying. Don't let the external appearance, ladies, take away from the message of your character in your life.

Now with that said, so he goes on, verse 11, "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve." He's saying, listen, I don't permit a woman," now this also could be a wife, and some folks will argue that, that this is a wife, must quietly receive instruction with entire submission, but I do not allow a wife to teach or exercise authority over a husband. But the problem is it doesn't say "her husband." It says "a husband." So it's really, it's clearly a woman and a man. A woman is not to teach or exercise authority over a man but to remain quiet. This is the paradox of spiritual authority. God has chosen to make it so that men lead in the home and men lead in the church. And men are to use that leadership if they're going to do what Paul's talking about in 1 Timothy 3, they're to be humble servants, leaders, not autocratic, dictatorial tyrants. God hates that kind of leadership. We're to lead like Jesus who did not come to be served but to serve.

Now that said, I think when you put that together with 1 Timothy 3:11, this is clearly not saying deaconesses. And the final thing is the word itself, 1 Timothy 3:11, women must

likewise be dignified, I think if he was going to say deaconesses, he would have said deaconesses. He had that word. He's used it in other places. He could have said deaconesses and been very clear. "Hey, there's an office of deaconesses." But here he says women, wives, it seems he's saying wives. Now, that's all I'm going to say about that. We're going to move on. Right now, Providence does not have women deacons, but we believe that wives are supposed to be helpers of the deacons and we respect and we have great fellowship with churches that do have women deacons so I hope you understand where we are on that. Okay.

So this is saying a deacon must have a godly wife and it mentions four things about her in the verse. Dignified, just the same word as deacons must be men of dignity, the wife must be dignified. Serious, reverent, inspiring a sense of reverence and respect. Not malicious gossips and not slanderers, another translation says. These are not women who are talebearers who want to always share what's going on with somebody when they know something. That's an ungodly characteristic that must not be true of the deacon's wife, must be fighting against that temptation and growing in holiness. But temperate, again, not slave of passion but moderate. And faithful in all things. So this says, look at the wife as well, as you consider who to nominate. That's a worthy walk.

So if we're going to be led and have the leadership God wants us to have, character, character, character, is what the Lord is saying. Again, not perfection, because if it were perfection, there would be nobody in leadership, but the direction. Are they out front in these areas? Are they out front? Literally, to be put in an office in the New Testament means to be out front. Are they out front ahead of you where you can look at them and say, "I can follow that man"? Then that's a worthy candidate for the office of deacon or elder.

So a worthy walk, that's the first main point. We come to the second main point: a mighty work. A mighty work. This is verse 13. "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus." This is an amazing verse. Those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing. I think there's two subpoints here that communicates that this is an impactful ministry. That's the idea. The ministry of deacon is impactful. It's potent. It has power. God esteems it very highly, and the church must as well.

"Those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing." Literally, it means a position of influence, of high regard. They're held in high esteem. I think the idea is mainly by the church, they're held in high esteem by the church. Certainly, they are by God as well. They serve well, that is, they give themselves, and this is the paradox again, to serve well, the word diakonos itself is the word for deacon, is a word which means a servant. A person who waits tables was the most common way this word would be used. So it is a more menial or more lowly term in general than the word overseer that we saw in verse 2 of the elder. It's servant but what he's saying here is that those who give themselves wholeheartedly to serving, to humble service, God exalts and God exalts not only in the eyes of heaven, but in the eyes of the church. If you exalt yourself, you'll be humbled. If you humble yourself, you'll be exalted.

Deacons who serve well have a ministry that at first glance looks humble. They're attending to practical needs. They're dealing with things that may seem secondary to the kingdom of God. Yet as they go at it, as they minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, God exalts them through their humility and the reality is there is no small deed in the body of Christ. Every practical need that you meet for another brother or sister is so important to Jesus that Jesus is going to call it out at the judgment. Remember the story in Matthew 25, the parable of the sheep and the goats when Jesus is going to divide all mankind by the sheep on his right hand, the goats on his left hand? And what's the difference between the sheep and the goats? It's what they did to people in the body of Christ. Jesus is going to say, "You're a sheep, you're on My right hand. Blessed are you because I was hungry and you fed Me. I was thirsty, you gave Me drink. I was in prison and you visited Me. I was naked and you clothed Me." And those on the right will say, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or naked or in prison?" He says, "In as much as you did it unto one of the least of these, My brothers, you did it also unto Me."

So the smallest act done for another believer is precious in the sight of the Savior and as we learn to serve, we understand over time that is a glorious thing. Humble service is majestic in the eyes of people who are thinking biblically and so the church lifts these people up to have prominent influence. That's the first subpoint. It's a mighty work because it's a position of prominent influence and, secondly, profound impact. This is in the idea, the second phrase here in verse 13, "they obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence." We're talking about great confidence in the faith. Other translations say "assurance." I really like what the King James says and New King James, "boldness." The word I think really is stronger than the English word "confidence" or "assurance." It's a word which speaks of a freedom from any timidity or any reserve. It means to be unreserved and moving towards something with a sense of almost abandon. So bold action is the idea. Without reservation. Assured. Bold. Not timid. Not fearful. Not reserved.

He's saying that they gain, deacons gain this sense of boldness in faith through serving well. I think what he's saying is, listen, as deacons serve practical needs – now think about this, how does this happen? A deacon gets involved in a situation, a practical ministry situation in the body of Christ and let's be honest here, the reality is that when people get involved in our lives where we're struggling, think about it, when people get involved in our lives where we're struggling, what do they find? What do we find when we help other people? What do they find when they help us? They find that things are messy, ugly, confusing, difficult. It's hard to help people deal with practical, real issues in life, and so what happens is the deacon comes and moves toward that situation. "I'm here to serve. I'm here to help." And he must call upon the power and wisdom of God to help this person and as he does, what happens is his faith grows. He sees the Lord work in a situation, a real practical ministry situation and he knows that the power of God is at work so his faith is enlarged. And the more that he does that, that's what serving well means, the more that he does that, the larger his faith gets, the bolder he gets, the more he believes God is able to do anything that we need him to do.

And so these men become the leaders of faith. And this is what sets them out. This is God's intention. It's not that deacons are a stepping stone to elder, although that may

sometimes be the case. It certainly happens that way some. No, the office of deacon is its own leadership office that the church is to say, "I want to be like that man in the way he confidently moves into situations which he knows he doesn't have the present resources for." God loves to put us in situations where we don't know what to do. We have no idea what to do, what to say. He loves to put us there because it makes us pray. When you read your Bible carefully, every great thing that happens where somebody has a tremendous spiritual breakthrough, they give a name to God, that's one of the things, follow the names of God through the Bible. Every time God's given a name, there's a situation that was impossible for man. They called on God. God did it, and now they have a name. You know, Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide. Jehovah Shema, you alone. The Lord is there. "I'm filthy, what am I going to do?" Yahweh Tsidkenu, the Lord, our righteousness. Every need that you have, God wants to meet through the resources of Jesus Christ and so he puts deacons there to get into the mess and mire of each of our lives to help us as we need help, and then they grow in faith and they unleash the power of God.

Now, I say all that to say I want you to think about something. This hit me with new profundity. I never thought about this before. Turn back to the book of Acts. Acts 6, we mentioned earlier, is where the seven are chosen. Verse 5, after they told him, choose seven, "The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith." Now, what I had not really thought about, I mean, I certainly knew Stephen is the first martyr but what's interesting is from that point, the focus, it's like the focus of the spotlight in Acts, if you read the book of Acts again, think about this, basically, the spotlight on the first half of Acts is on Peter. The spotlight in the second half is on Paul. You just can't get away from it. You read it, yeah, there are other people interacting and stuff, but it's on Peter, then it's on Paul. Peter's four sermons in Acts, actually has more than that, but four in just the first five chapters. But what you have in the middle of this focus on Peter and Paul, the two key apostles, Peter, the apostle to the Jews, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, you have in the middle of this an interruption that starts at Acts 6:8 and it goes all the way through chapter 8, and what happens is the focus becomes two men, two deacons.

First, Stephen, verse 8, "Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing," this is Acts 6:8, "Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. Now, what's going to happen is a crowd's going to gather around him. They're going to accuse him of blasphemy. He's going to preach a sermon that is 53 verses long in chapter 7. And he's going to be put to death. He's going to be the first martyr. He preaches an amazing sermon. And it hit me, his sermon is more than twice as long as Peter's sermon in Acts 2. Now, I don't know how long they preached. We know the text is giving us a summary of what they actually said. They didn't just preach, you know, two and a half minutes that it takes to read that passage. They preached longer, but he's given us a divinely inspired summary of that sermon and what I want you to note is, God thought that Stephen's sermon deserved twice as much airtime as Peter's in Acts 2. That's

something to consider. In fact, you add up all four of Peter's first sermons, they come to 51 verses. Four sermons, 51 verses. Stephen, one sermon, 53 verses.

The Lord is showing us, he's exalting these men who were servants, who got involved in the weeds and dealing with stuff, and yet, it's not just that they're doing practical things, because if you deal with practical things, God wants you to deal with spiritual things. God always wants to move from the natural to the spiritual. Always from the physical need to the spiritual need. This is what we saw in the healing of the blind man that we read about earlier in John 9. It's not about physical blindness that God's concerned, it's about spiritual blindness. Look at the physical need, blindness, look at the spiritual need it represents. And so, really, a deacon should always be asking, what is the Lord trying to show you through this physical challenge? And then they are using the power of God, the word of God, to instruct and to build up the body.

Now, Philip, I'm not going to take time to read it, just read it yourself later. Philip, he's used mightily, he's doing signs and wonders, he's preaching, he's actually picked up by the Holy Spirit and planted miles away to preach the gospel. God loves the office of deacon. He wants deacons to be men of faith who are bold in faith, leading the church, to go where we would not go otherwise.

This is the kind of leadership you and I need. We all need to be led by men who are shepherding us, who are serving us, and are leading us to shepherd others and to serve others because we're all called to that ministry. We need to pray just like Jesus said, pray that the Lord of the harvest will raise up workers for the harvest, that he'll take the men of this church and make them more like this. He'll make us more like this and he'll help us as followers of Christ to become more like them. He really wants a congregation where people are humble and teachable, cheering each other on continually, rejoicing in the success you see your brother, your sister make, glorying in Christ that he's doing that, and following them as they are ahead of you in this area or behind you in that area, follow them where they're ahead and lead them where they're behind. That's what we're supposed to do. It's all about, "Follow me as I follow Jesus." The glory of the gospel, he makes us his own and he gives us to one another as a family and says, "Now serve one another and in serving one another, love Me. You're loving Me when you love My children."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, how grateful we are for Your precious word. We stand in awe of Your wisdom, the way that You've ordered the church. Lord, as an officer of the church myself, I know that I and my brothers feel unworthy in so many ways. Help us to be more repentant, more broken, more humble, more willing to follow one another. Thank You that You love to take broken people and use them mightily. So keep breaking us, keep humbling us, do whatever's necessary to make us know that all that we need is Jesus. Do Your work in our lives. Build Your church, Lord Jesus. We pray this so that Your name will be glorified, we'll be more what You want us to be. In Jesus name, amen.

Today we have the joy of worshiping the Lord through the Lord's Table. I'm asking the men to come forward to distribute.