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Looking for Deacons; 1 Cor 16:10-18  
GPBC  
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Introduction – Next Sunday morning we will nominate four men to serve in the office of deacon for three years. Because the service of deacons is so important in the life and health of the church, I try to spend at least one Sunday before nominations looking to Scripture for guidance.

Serving as a deacon is a unique role, in a unique setting, at a unique time. It's a unique role. Being a deacon is not the same as being a pastor, although both are recognized in the NT as spiritual leaders in the church. God has assigned pastors to oversee the spiritual well-being of each local congregation and deacons to oversee the physical well-being of each local congregation. In this way, God has provided wholistically, body and soul, for the needs of the many and the individual. It's also a unique role in the sense that while we are all called to serve one another, the deacon is recognized by the congregation as a servant.

And the deacon serves in a unique setting. What I mean by that is that the local church is an entirely different and unique setting than any other environment. The calling of deacon is a spiritual calling to a spiritual task to serve the Body of Christ that meets at 254 Grassy Pond Rd. And each local church has its own context, its own set of strengths and weaknesses, and is composed of members who have various needs. While it is hoped that all local congregations would hold fast to the truths of Scripture, yet they are still very different in terms of issues to address, decisions to be made, and needs to be met.

And the deacon serves at a unique time as well. The next 3 years will not be the same as the previous three years. Congregations change in size and current issues and doctrinal challenges and on and on. Challenges such as Covid place our church in a context that is very different than pre-Covid.

Because deacons serve the church of Jesus Christ in a unique role, a unique setting, and in a unique time, when we are called upon next week to nominate 4 men to serve this congregation, it is a high and serious calling and task. We have been entrusted with the task of selecting the right men to serve this church for 3 years. What kind of men are we looking for?

- I. Men Like Timothy
  - a. As we examine the characteristics of these men whom the Apostle Paul commends to the church at Corinth, we'll notice that not only are we looking for men with similar traits but Paul also gives instructions to the church on how to relate to these men as well.
    - i. So the first point of application for us is to know that serving as deacon carries with it a mutual, spiritual relationship between the deacon and the church. Not only are they called to serve us, but we are called to honor them and follow their leadership.
  - b. Notice that Paul says Timothy is doing the work of the Lord. That's exactly the kind of men we want serving our church. Men who are already doing the work of the Lord. Whether that be that these men are involved in ministry in the church or that they display a servant's heart to others in and outside the church or a combination of both. The point is if we are going to ask men to serve us, we want to ask men who are already serving.
    - i. Deacons are laymen. They are not paid staff. They have jobs and obligations and responsibilities to their families. So who are the men among us who are doing the work of the Lord on their jobs and in their homes? Those are the men we are looking for.
  - c. And when we find those men, Paul says "see that you put Timothy at ease among you." In other words, don't make his ministry more difficult than it already is by grumbling and complaining and criticizing.
    - i. The church at Corinth was a troubled church with many issues that needed addressing; divisions, doctrines, morality. And Timothy was a young and timid man. There was no way possible that Timothy could please everyone in the church with the leadership and decisions and changes that needed to be made.
    - ii. Don't make it hard for those who are trying their best to do the work of the Lord in the church. Respect and pray for and support and follow them, even when you may not agree 100% with them.

- iii. Remember, the ministry here at the church is not about the staff, not about the deacons, and not about individual members. It's about the gospel. It's about Christ. It's about reaching people and making disciples. It's about taking the gospel to the ends of the world.

## II. Men Like Apollos

- a. Evidently the church had requested Apollos to come and Paul had endorsed that request and passed it along to Apollos. We don't know the reason. Maybe the church needed Apollos to pastor them through these challenges.
- b. Whatever the reason, Apollos was willing to go but for some reason not able to go immediately. Something else would detain him for a while, maybe family obligations or pressing needs in his own church. But when the Lord opened a way for him to come, he was committed to come. He was willing to make room in his busy, obligated life for ministry. That's the kind of men we are looking for.
- c. There's likely not a single man in our church whose life is not already filled. Our plates get filled with the necessities of work and family, and we fill up the extra corners of free time with activities and hobbies and interests. We're all busy.
- d. But there are a few among us who are willing to push aside some of the items on their plates to make room to serve the Lord and serve His church – and that's who we are looking for. Men willing to make room in their lives to be a blessing, to be a ministry.

## III. Men Like Stephanas

- a. Stephanas and his whole household were the first converts to Christianity in the region of Achaia. When the gospel took hold of Stephanas, he and his whole family and this may even include any servants that lived with him, they all became the fountain through which the gospel spread and eventually led to the planting of the first church in a region that previously had known nothing of Christ.
- b. The first lesson we learn about Stephanas is that he took up the mantle of being the spiritual leader of his home. He came to Christ and he brought his whole family with him. That's the kind of men we are looking for.

- i. Before we ask men to step up as leaders in the church, we want to see them being leaders in their homes. We want men who love their wives and encourage them spiritually. We want men who shepherd their children and bring them up in the Lord. We want men who set the spiritual example and temperature for their homes. We want men who open the Word at home and bring their families to church and involve their families in serving others and growing in the Lord. Spiritual leaders begin in the home.
- c. That brings us to the second lesson about Stephanas. He loved the church. He loved his brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul said they devoted themselves to the service of the saints. There it is! The service of the saints. They were present in the life of the church, loving and serving and meeting needs. They were deacons without being called deacons. They worked behind the scenes and served out front. They were devoted to the saints. That's the kind of men we are looking for.
- d. And Paul says when we find those men who are devoted to the saints, we are to be subject to them. We are to honor them and trust them and follow them. Just as Timothy was known to be doing the work of the Lord, Stephanas was known to be serving the saints for their good in the Lord. So let them be free to serve and lead.

#### IV. Men Like Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus

- a. Along with Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were part of the 3 men delegation that the church had sent to Paul. They were leaders within the church. The church trusted them to accurately convey the issues to Paul and to bring Paul's instructions back to them. They were trusted leaders.
- b. But there's something more here, something you don't find in just anyone – Paul says even though these men brought troubling news, just being in their company, they refreshed Paul's spirit. Their attitude and faith and conversation lifted Paul's spirit. They were like a breath of fresh air. They encouraged Paul and strengthened him. That's exactly the kind of men we are looking for. Encouragers. Blessers. People we trust and who lift us up.

- c. And what are we to do when we find them? Give recognition to them. In our specific context for this sermon, we might say it like – nominate them to be your deacons!

Conclusion – Men – if our hearts are right with God and our priorities are right with God, this church should be filled with men like these. It should be very difficult to nominate 4 men next week, not because it's difficult to think of 4 men like these but rather because it's difficult to narrow the list down to four men because there are so many like these.

There is another word for the congregation in vv13-14. We'll close with these admonitions. Because the work of the ministry and living for the Lord is not just assigned to pastors and deacons but to every child of God. Paul says – be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men (Be courageous), be strong. Church, we are living in a day that we as believers have no other option than to be watchful, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong and let all that we do be done in love! As the culture around us grows increasingly hostile to the Christian faith, we have more opportunity than ever to shine the truth of the gospel and the love of Christ if we will rise to our time and do these very things. May God help us to do so!