

THE ROCK COMMUNITY CHURCH

1 Timothy 3:8-13

“Deacons: God's Official Servants”

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23:17

But this week we're going back to where we've been kind of plugging our way through the book of 1 Timothy. So I want to invite you to make your way to 1 Timothy. And while you guys are making your way there, I'm going to warn you that you're going to have to stick a finger or a bookmark or something in 1 Timothy.

23:32

We're actually going to take a little detour this morning as we get started. But just as a reminder, since it's been a few weeks, I know if anybody else's brain leaks as bad as mine does, we forget stuff often, right?

23:44

So just a refresher for where we've been in the book of 1 Timothy. We've been talking about the importance of believing rightly and just a few weeks ago in 1 Timothy chapter three, in the first few verses of that chapter, we saw Paul kind of lay out the qualifications, the character expectations that God has for the leaders of his church, the leaders called the elders of the church.

24:10

And so as we're going to continue through 1 Timothy chapter three, what we're going to see in verses eight through 13 that we're going to look at this morning, he talks about last time in this passage, he was looking at the leaders and what their qualifications and characteristics should be.

24:25

And this week, what we're looking at are a group of people in the church that are called to serve, the recognized servants of the church that are referred to here as deacons. So the deacons qualifications are very similar to the qualifications for an elder, but there is one primary difference that the elders are called to be able to teach and the deacons don't have that expectation placed upon them.

24:48

So before we dive into 1 Timothy three, and we're going to look as well at Acts chapter six for just a few minutes, I want to invite you to pray with me before we get started, would you guys pray? God, we thank you for your word, we thank you for the church being gathered together on this beautiful Sunday morning that we can gather with the body of Christ that's gathered here at this location.

25:09

God, we thank you that we can be an encouragement to one another that we can be all of the things that you call us to be, that we can live in love with one another, that we can live in encouragement, that we can do all of these different things that you command and call your body to do and be.

25:27

And so God, as we have gathered here this morning, as we now come to the time where we get to humble ourselves before your word, God, we pray that you would speak, that in the power of your Holy Spirit that you would convict us if we need to be convicted, that you would encourage us if we need to be encouraged and God that we would consider deeply, that we would receive what you have for us this morning.

25:46

So we give this time to you, we pray that you would speak and that your servants would listen. That's in Jesus' name we pray, amen. All right, well before we jump into First Timothy, chapter three, I told you that we were gonna look first at the book of Acts, chapter six.

26:01

Now, when we look at Acts, chapter six, what we're gonna see is where the role of Deacon that we're gonna talk about in First Timothy, it's where the role of Deacon kind of originated. So I think it's good for us to figure out who are these people, Deacons, that show up on the scene in First Timothy, we should consider where they came from and what they're doing in the church and why they're there.

26:23

So I wanna invite you to turn to Acts, chapter six and just to give you a little bit of an idea of what's going on here. In Acts, chapter six, the early church is kind of getting started and the organization is still kind of coming together, God is working and incredible things are happening in this early church in the beginning of the book of Acts.

26:42

But in Acts, chapter six, what we see is that the apostles and their ministry is being hindered because of a very tangible problem that has popped up in the church, namely the distribution of food as the church was taking care of widows and there was some argument that was happening inside of the church.

26:59

So we're gonna look at Acts, chapter six. I wanna invite you to read along with me as we read verses one through six together. You can follow along in your copy or on the screens. It says in Acts, Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists, the Greek believers arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.

27:24

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, who we will appoint to this duty.

27:41

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. And what they said, please the whole gathering. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. And these they set before the apostles and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

28:03

So what we see here in Acts chapter six is that the early church kind of has a problem, right? A very simple problem, but a very complicated problem in the same way. Simply put, the widows of the church that the church is taking care of, they need food. They need to be provided for. The widows need to eat. But meanwhile, that has become a pretty substantial ministry.

28:25

The taking care of the felt needs of the church has become essentially a full -time job. And so the apostles are sitting here with this problem because the apostles are called and commanded by God to preach the Word of God and to be men of prayer, people that are called to their ministry in the church.

28:44

And the apostles can't preach and do what their responsibility is if they're spending all of their time providing food service for these people in the church that needed food service. Now, the solution to this is not to diminish either of those roles, either of those responsibilities.

28:59

But what is described here is that deacons are the solution to this problem that we see in Acts chapter six. It says that the apostles, the word that they used for serving tables here in Acts chapter six is the Greek word for deaconing, the Greek word *diákonos*.

29:18

And now this office is simply named for what it does. The Greek word means to serve. And so as people who are called to serve, they call them the servers, right? I don't know how they came up with that creative name. But deacons are the people who served in the church. They had this responsibility. So the apostles in Acts six, they established this model that still continues as prescriptive for the church of God today.

29:43

There's this division of labor that happens here, right? The apostles and then by extension the elders of the church, as we see in 1 Timothy 3, the elders and the apostles primarily devote themselves to the prayer and to the ministry of proclaiming the word of God.

30:00

Their labor is in the spiritual work of prayer and preaching. Meanwhile, there are these other things that need to be dealt with. There are tangible things that the church needs help with, that somebody needs food, or somebody over here needs help in some other way.

30:14

And so what the deacons do is the deacons serve like their title suggests, right? They take care of people's material needs in a spiritual way, and both are valuable to the church. In fact, both are essential to the church as 1 Timothy is going to talk about.

30:31

I found this as I was studying this week, the book of church order of the Presbyterian church in America talks a little bit about the role of deacons. And they say that the office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of service, both to the physical and to the spiritual needs of the people.

30:47

So what we see in Acts 6 is kind of the establishment of this role, this official office in the early church. And so now that we've looked at Acts 6 and kind of seen where deacons originated from, we're going to fast forward a little bit in the timeline where we get to the point where 1 Timothy is written.

31:06

And in 1 Timothy 3, I want to invite you to turn back over there now. We're going to look at our main passage for the morning. And what we see in 1 Timothy 3 is what Paul has to say about who these deacons should be, what character qualities they should have in order to be selected and blessed as deacons.

31:24

And so we want to read now from 1 Timothy chapter 3. Once you've made your way over there, we'll read together verses 8 through 13. So it says starting in verse 8, it says that deacons likewise, in the same way he was just talking about elders a minute ago, deacons now must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.

31:48

They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, and let them also be tested first, and then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded and faithful in all things.

32:04

Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves, and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

32:20

The first thing that we saw in Acts chapter six was the purpose of deacons, why they exist. But what we see here is we pick up the story in 1st Timothy chapter three is the character that should be seen in deacons.

32:31

Talking about deacons character, and we look at that specifically in verses eight through 10, we see their character. And so as Paul is explaining the qualifications for these servants of the church, he turns his attention from the elders at the beginning of this chapter.

32:47

Now he looks to deacons in verses eight through 13. Now, if you remember, I know it was a few weeks ago, but if you remember at the beginning of this chapter, when we look at the qualifications for elders, for overseers of the church, Paul focuses primarily on character, not skills.

33:07

He doesn't make a long list of things that this person should be good with finances, that they should be a business leader, that they should be an influential person or a great orator. It doesn't talk about a list of skills.

33:19

What he talks about is a list of character traits. He's talking about the type of person that this leader should be, not the skills that they should possess. And in the same way as he did that in talking about elders, he does the same thing here with deacons.

33:34

He's focused on character, not on skills. If a deacon is called to an office, I read this and I'm reminded of something that I heard a preacher say a long time ago, I don't wanna take claim of this, but I heard a preacher one time say that God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called.

33:54

I think that's kind of the way that this works, right? God's not asking us to look around the church and to find people that have great skill sets and we'll just figure out how to kind of polish up that person and hopefully use them for church service instead of their secular job world skills that they may be a great business person or a great finance person or a great manager in some other area of life, but that's not what God is asking the church to go find influential people.

34:24

God is more concerned about who deacons and elders are than about what they do. And so what we see here in this passage is the character requirements for deacons. We proceed through this list, if we start in verse eight, we're gonna see a few different things that he talks about and we'll just proceed through them pretty quickly here this morning.

34:43

The first thing that we see is that a deacon likewise must be dignified. They must be dignified. He must be someone whose character solicits a response of respect, of admiration. This is someone who's not the butt end of a joke, but it's someone who can be taken seriously in whatever context it is that they find themselves.

35:03

A deacon should have the respect of the people that they come into contact with. This isn't someone who just gets shrugged off and pushed aside. They should be dignified and thought of well by people when their name comes up in a conversation.

35:16

The next thing it says, it says deacons likewise should not be double -tongued. Essentially what he's saying here is that deacons should do what they say they're going to do, right? They can't be two -faced.

35:27

They can't be someone who speaks out of both sides of their mouth. If we've kind of heard that term before, this isn't someone who spreads rumors, this isn't someone who breaks confidences, this isn't someone who runs around with lots of things to say and no integrity behind their words.

35:45

Essentially a person that's going to be called as a deacon should be a person of their word. Just like Jesus was talking about in the Sermon of the Mount in Matthew chapter five, Jesus said, let your yes be yes and your no be no.

35:59

Well essentially I think that's what he's talking about here with deacons as well. Deacons should be people of their word, people that can be trusted that when they say something, that's what they think, that's what's really true.

36:10

They shouldn't be double -tongued. It continues, deacons likewise should not be addicted to much wine. Now the Greek word that's translated here as "addicted" is translated, that same word is translated in other places as "devoted."

36:23

They shouldn't be devoted to much wine. This shouldn't be someone who is preoccupied with drinking or really any other appetite that they may have. A person who like Isaiah chapter five says is a hero a drinking wine, that person can't be a deacon.

36:39

If their appetites for wine or for any other area, they should be disciplined in their appetites in a way that they can control themselves and make sure that God's important things in their life are the important things in their life.

36:56

Deacons are actually not forbidden to drink. If you took a one page to the right turn, you're gonna see in first Timothy chapter five, Paul actually advises Timothy to drink a little wine for the sake of his stomach.

37:08

So we can't say that deacons are forbidden in any sense of drinking wine altogether, but what God is saying here is that he wants his people to be sober -minded, that if someone is gonna lead in the church that they should be preoccupied with the things of God, not some other appetite that they wanna chase after.

37:25

And so whether that is wine, whether that is something else, they shouldn't be controlled by anything else except for the spirit of God that is at work in their life. We should be controlled, possessed by the spirit, not by all the other things that may grab on to and drag a person away after.

37:44

The next thing that it says, talking about the qualifications of deacons, is that a deacon likewise must not be greedy for dishonest gain. I think this one seems rather obvious as an important step for us as we look at the qualifications of a deacon.

37:58

A deacon can't be someone who loves money and seeks after money in dishonest ways. Any person who loves money more than they love God, well, they're not qualified even to be a disciple of Jesus, must less a deacon as Jesus was talking about in the Sermon on the Mount.

38:17

If you love money more than you love me, you're not fit to be my disciple. The reason for this warning that they can't be greedy is obvious to me. Deacons and elders, in the same sense, it talked about this earlier in the chapter for elders as well, deacons and elders are involved intimately in the business of the church.

38:39

Deacons handle some of the church financial responsibilities from time to time as they would be going in Acts 6, they would go and take food to these widows, they would distribute the church's resources to the needy in the church.

38:51

They have the responsibility to be people of integrity so that we can trust that what they say they're going to do, they're going to go and do and are not greedily trying to take for themselves. They have to be people of integrity and people of their word.

39:06

Finally, it says in verses 8 through 10, the last thing that we see in there is that it says that a deacon likewise must be one who holds to the mystery of the faith. The qualifications for serving as a deacon, they start with conduct, they start with the way that a person's life is lived, but that's not where they end.

39:26

It's not just that you have to live a certain way. Deacons also have to have sound doctrine, they have to believe rightly in addition to respectable character. As crazy as it seems, I know you guys may have forgotten this, but as we were going through 1

Timothy, we're only three chapters in, but it seems like about, this is an estimate, about 150 times already in this book, Paul has made the argument, we have to believe rightly.

39:50

Make sure that you defend the faith and that we hold to the right truths because if we don't believe rightly, we can't act rightly. We have to know the right things and believe the right things about God before we can try to live it out because if we don't believe right, we can't act right.

40:07

Essentially what he's saying here is that deacons must have sound doctrine in addition to their respectable character. What are some of these mysteries or deep truths of the faith that he might be talking about here?

40:19

I think essentially it's the basic doctrines of Christianity. We're talking about some wonderful, some important things that we have to believe, but they're also incredibly deep mysteries as we go through.

40:34

If you start to think too hard about these things, you may overheat something in your head. If we think about the reality that God, that one God exists in three separate distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, don't think too hard about that.

40:49

It'll make your head hurt. The fact that God created everything out of nothing, that sounds crazy if we start to try to figure out how does that work? God spoke and the universe flew out into existence.

41:03

What did he use to make the universe? Nothing. God created everything out of nothing. Humanity sinned against God and deserves to come under judgment, but the Father, God, the Father, sent God, the Son into the world to save sinners.

41:18

People who are identified as enemies of God, God gave his one and only Son to save people that were his enemies. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me. That seems like a mystery. It's kind of hard to wrap my mind around.

41:30

The fact that Jesus, God, the Son, was born as a man and was both fully God and fully man simultaneously, figure out how someone is 100% God and 100% man. When you figure that out, let me know. Right?

41:45

Finally, the mystery that everyone who believes in the Son of God has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, received eternal life. That is an incredible mystery that I know personally, but there's parts of my head that mystery doesn't completely make sense to me.

42:04

The fact that God would reach into humanity, that God would save enemies of his, that he would give us eternal life, not through anything that we had done or that we deserved, but through the sacrifice and the work of Jesus.

42:15

That is a mystery to me. Deacons, as we talk about some of these basic doctrines of Christianity, deacons must both believe rightly about things, these things, and be able to defend these basic principles.

42:29

They must hold rightly to the mysteries of the faith. Continuing on, it says in verse 10 that as these are the character traits of a person who could be called a deacon, it says in verse 10 now, to let them be tested.

42:46

A church cannot simply select someone to be a deacon based on superficial reasons. You know, hey, I like this person because they're tall or they have pretty hair and, you know, I'm jealous of their hair so I want them to be a deacon in our church.

42:58

What? I'm jealous of their hair because... Anyways, we don't look at someone and evaluate them for external reasons. We don't even look at them and evaluate them for good but kind of superficial evaluations where we look at someone and go, you know, they seem like a good person.

43:20

We should have that person serve in the church. Okay, what he's saying here is that this person should be tested before they become a deacon or in the same way before they become an elder of the church.

43:30

Their faithfulness must be proven. You know, this is a principle that we see universally throughout the Christian faith. In fact, Jesus talks about this in the book of Luke, right? The universal principle of Christian ministry is that being faithful in some things allows you to be faithful in many things.

43:50

That being prepared for greater service often happens by being faithful in some smaller role that God allows you to serve in in some way. Faithfulness should be proven and so we have to give time and space an opportunity for deacon candidates to prove themselves before they would be quickly thrust into a role.

44:11

There's no description of exactly what this process looks like but what he's saying is that we should be careful to inspect the faith and the character of a person before rushing them to a title and to a role.

44:23

They must be someone of proven character. One specific area where their character can be seen and can be observed is actually what he continues in this passage with in verses 11 and 12. By observing their family life.

44:37

In verses 11 and 12 we see it talk about deacons and their families and so the rest of the qualifications in this passage for deacons are actually domestic qualifications. You know, if they're married they should have stable families and so let's read verses 11 and 12 together, consider what he has to say about the family of a deacon.

44:57

In verse 11 he says that their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers but sober-minded and faithful in all things and let deacons each be the husband of one wife managing their children and their own households well.

45:10

The term that we see there in verse 11 that in the ESV is translated as wives, that word in the Greek language can be translated to English as either wives or women and so depending on what your translation is that you're sitting there with in your lap, yours may say that their wives or the women must likewise be dignified, not slander, that changes the meaning just a little bit.

45:32

Now as I studied this I believe, personally I believe that this is addressing the wives, that the spouses of deacons, I think it makes better sense of the context and of what's going on here as verse 12 talks about the family life of a deacon as well.

45:48

So let's just, we'll address the opposite in just a minute but for now let's just assume that he's referring to the spouse of a deacon as he says these things. So as he's talking in verse 11 he's talking about that the wives let the wives be and he starts to kind of lay out some characteristics of the spouse of a deacon as well.

46:08

These wives whether they hold official offices or not they have a responsibility for serving others. If someone is going to be a servant of God's church there's going to be times where that impacts their family right?

46:21

Anybody that's been in the church or ever served before that you went and did something but it had an impact indirectly on your family as well? Anybody ever experience that? I know I do on a regular basis right?

46:32

I may be here serving in some way but in the same way my wife is at home serving because she might not be here but she is allowing me to have the flexibility to come and to be here. My service impacts my wife and my family as well.

46:47

So these wives whether or not they hold official offices they have responsibilities for serving if someone is going to serve as a deacon. That's why they must possess certain character qualities that are fit for a servant actually very similarly to the qualifications that he lays out for deacons here.

47:05

It says in verse 11 that a deacon's wife talking about this spouse that they should first it says that they should be dignified. We just talked about that with deacons a few minutes ago. They should command the respect of the people who meet them and come into contact with them.

47:20

It says also that a deacon's wife should not be a slanderer. They must not be known as gossips. They can't be busybodies. You know, there's times where service and ministry in the church, it forces us into situations where maybe there's kind of some difficult stuff going on in a person's life.

47:36

If you're gonna come and reach in and you're gonna help in some practical way, maybe there's some financial need that your spouse knows about. And by extension, the wife, the spouse finds out about that.

47:47

Well, they can't be a busybody that's gonna round. Hey, did you hear that so -and -so is dealing with... there's no place for that, right? They can't be a slanderer. They can't run around and talk about everybody else's stuff.

48:00

They have to know how to control their tongue. It also says that they must be sober - minded in the same way that a deacon should be sober -minded. They can't be controlled by anything except for the Spirit of God that is at work in their life.

48:13

They must be clear -minded and exhibit good judgment in their decision -making. And finally, it says that they should be faithful in all things. This person should be trustworthy. This person should be reliable, dependable.

48:25

They should be faithful in all the things that they say that they're going to do. They should be the person that you don't have to worry about whether or not something's gonna get done. It's just gonna be taken care of.

48:34

He continues on talking about the family life of a deacon and he continues into verse 12 where he says, let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing his household well. Now, just like the elders, this same qualification shows up earlier in the chapter that an elder should be the husband of one wife.

48:53

Essentially, literally translated, that can be stated as a one -woman man. Now, this standard has to do with marital fidelity, marital faithfulness. This isn't something to say that a single person is not qualified to be a deacon or qualified to be an elder.

49:07

But what it does mean is that a deacon should be a one -woman man. If they're unmarried, that means that they're sexually pure in their lifestyle. That means that they maintain their purity in very specific and very tangible ways.

49:23

They must be someone who's above reproach, that no accusation can be levied against them. And if a person is married in the same way, they must be faithful to their wife. Not, you know, we could tease this out a million different directions.

49:36

Not a polygamist, that's a problem, right? Not someone who is regularly running off and running outside of their marriage relationship with their spouse. If they're running around and getting other things on it, well, that's a problem, right?

49:49

Even in our thought life, that it's important for this deacon to be faithful to his spouse and not to just run around and fulfill those sexual desires in any way that it comes out. Deacon must prove his character by being faithful to his wife and by extension to the rest of his family.

50:08

If a man loves his wife and disciplines his children and leads his home well, then what he's doing is he's providing evidence that he is filled with the Holy Spirit of God, that God is at work in his life.

50:19

He's being tested and proven as this passage talked about just a few moments earlier. How, by extension, can a person who's not doing those things, how can that person serve the people of God and the church of God if he's not first serving his family and his children that God has given him responsibility to lead and to take care of?

50:41

You know, all this conversation, though, about families and husbands and wives and men and women, I think all this conversation about deacons' wives kind of seems to beg the question, what do we do with the question of women deacons?

50:54

Is there a space for women to serve as deacons in the church of God? Well, if we look at the evidence that we see throughout scripture in favor of female deacons, we can put the prose over here in the con, I don't know if anybody else does that, but you know, I got the pros side of the list and the cons side of the list, right?

51:13

Well, if we lay everything out, the reality is that the results are inconclusive. They don't give us a clear answer. So if the term that we translated as wives back in verse 11, referring to wives or women, if that should actually be translated as women, well, then there seem to be some expectations that are given for female deacons here in this passage.

51:36

Let the women deacons be dignified, not be slanderers, not be that they should be sober-minded, all of these things that we just talked about a minute ago. Diaconal ministry of women is certainly present elsewhere in the Bible though.

51:50

What we see, if we remember that term, deacon, is simply the word that means to serve. What we see women that are described as serving in several places throughout the New Testament and throughout scriptures.

52:02

We see them carrying out this deacon, this service ministry in the broad sense in several different places throughout scripture. I put just a few things up there on the list. I kind of made a little list of some women that we see serving in tangible ways in the New Testament.

52:17

We see in Acts chapter 9 that Dorcas was described as being full of good works and acts of charity. She served in very tangible ways. Lydia in Acts chapter 16, it says that she clothed the Philippians.

52:31

She took care of tangible needs of the people in the city of Philippi. In Romans 16, we see two women, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who were described as workers in the Lord. That sounds like someone who's serving, who's actively meeting the needs of other people.

52:47

In fact, in Romans 16, there's another woman mentioned there named Phoebe as well. Phoebe was identified as a servant of the church at Cenchreae. Literally, she's being described as a servant. That word servant is the word that means deacon.

53:03

She's being described in literal terms as a deaconess in Romans 16. To summarize, while it doesn't tell us in this passage, it kind of speaks in masculine terms, we see many New Testament women carrying out the practical service ministry of deacons.

53:23

At least one was specifically referred to as a deaconess in Romans 16 as we see Phoebe there. I think the obvious conclusion is that whether we argue over titles or not, women are given the responsibility and the expectation that they would use the gifts that God has given them to serve the people of God in the same way that a man is expected to serve and to play a role in the family of God.

53:50

Women are expected, are called to be deeply involved in the service of the church in the same way that a man would be. So, I think that now begs the question, do churches who recognize female deacons contradict what the Bible has to say about male headship?

54:05

We talked about that a few weeks ago as we were talking about women in the church as we talked about what Paul had to say in 1 Timothy chapter 2. We talked about this idea of male headship that God has called men to lead in his church.

54:20

So what do we do with these women who were serving, who were playing this tangible deacon role in the New Testament church? Do churches who recognize female deacons contradict the Bible's teaching? I think the answer is no.

54:34

I don't think they do. As long as these women deacons are functioning as deacons, then I don't see a problem there. Now, the problem is that some churches refer to people as deacons that aren't actually functioning as deacons.

54:47

A deacon is someone who serves in the church. Meanwhile, I grew up in the south. You guys may or may not know that. You may or may not hear it in my voice. But I was born in North Carolina. Y'all, right?

54:59

I was born in North Carolina. I grew up most of my life in Virginia. So growing up in the south, every church that I grew up in had a deacon board. And the deacon board was the governing body of the church.

55:11

Things got decided. Things got a thumbs up or a thumbs down based on what the deacons of the church had to say about it. That's not deacons like the Bible describes deacons. That's deacons that are governing or leading the church in some way.

55:22

Well, deacons in 1 Timothy and deacons in the New Testament are servants of the church, not leaders of the church. And so as long as the deacons in a church are

functioning as deacons should in a church, well, there's no problem with a woman or a man being a deacon.

55:38

Both, in fact, should be deacons. Women are recognized as deacons. That wouldn't be violating the biblical principle of male headship because they're not ruling. They're simply serving and using the gifts that God has given them as they should, right?

55:53

1 Timothy and other places in the New Testament are clear that women are not allowed the authority to rule or to preach with authority as we talked about when we studied 1 Timothy 2. We don't have time for that whole discussion, but if you want to, the sermon's online.

56:08

You can go back and check that one out. I think the guy did a pretty good job explaining all of that. As long as we don't go outside of that boundary, that God established that men should lead in the very tangible ways as elders in his church, women can and should use the gifts that God has given them to the fullest extent that God has enabled them to serve.

56:33

Women, you are given a responsibility to serve in the church of God. This isn't something that you get to just stand back and take a passive role and say, I'm just gonna be back here, right? If God has gifted you and God has equipped you and God has called you to service, step up and serve, step up and do what God is inviting you and calling you to do.

56:53

And so finally we get to verse 13 to the end of our passage. And what we see is this reward that is described for deacons who serve well. Verse 13 says, for those who serve

well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

57:12

Verse 13 talks about a reward that God will endow to the deacon who serves well. It says that they will have a good standing or a good rank in the church. Now this standing doesn't need to be an officially recognized rank.

57:25

You don't get patches or merit badges or anything like that for coming to church and serving well. This isn't something that we get externally recognized. A lot of the time a good servant kind of works in the shadows.

57:36

We don't actually get any attention for what we do in serving. But a simple recognition from the congregation that that person loves me, that that person is looking out for my best interest. That person loves this church.

57:49

That reputation is the reward that God gives for exemplary faithfulness as someone would serve faithfully as a deacon. That may or may not even lead to increasing influence, but whether it leads to increasing influence, increasing recognition or not is a blessing to be used by God.

58:09

And that service will reflect well, not just on you, but also on the God that you're there serving. And I think the greatest reward that we can acknowledge that a deacon who serves well receives is the intimacy and the connection, the opportunity to closely tie themselves to the savior Jesus Christ.

58:30

Because Acts 6 is the first time that we see this role of deacon kind of formally talked about in the scriptures. That it was first talked about as an established role that someone could be a deacon.

58:44

But the term deaconing actually is not just showing up on the scene in Acts 6. We see it earlier in scripture as well. In fact, Jesus sometimes uses the word deacon to describe his own ministry. Remember that word deacon simply means to serve.

58:59

And so what I wanna read for you is from Mark chapter 10, this word deaconing in the Greek. It shows up several times in a passage that I think may sound familiar to you. Let me read for you Mark chapter 10 verses 43 through 45 with a little paraphrasing mixed in.

59:17

It says in Mark 10, whoever would be great among you must be your deacon. Whoever would be first among you must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to receive deacon care but to serve as a deacon and to give his life as a ransom for many.

59:32

Mark 10 often translated in our English versions, our English Bible, it says that Jesus didn't come to be served but to serve, to give his life for others. Well, that idea, that word that we see there is deaconing.

59:46

Deacons have the opportunity to serve in the same way that our Savior came and served. Just as Jesus gave of himself and what he had for other people, we have the opportunity to serve and to give of ourselves for other people.

01:00:03

Deacons serve because Jesus first loved them and served them. I found a quote from T.F. Torrance that I wanted to share with you guys that kind of summarizes this whole conversation. T.F. Torrance once said, it is only in this Jesus that we learn what diaconia really is.

01:00:24

The loving service and mercy that looks for no reward beyond the knowledge that we do what is commanded of us and looks for no thanks from those to whom mercy is extended. But it is only because this Jesus has made our cause his very own, sharing our existence and servitude and sharing with us his own life of love that we may and can engage in this kind of diaconia in him.

01:00:51

We serve because Jesus came and served. We are given a blessing, a connection, an intimacy with Jesus because we give of ourselves in the same way that he did. And so as the New Testament talks about deacons, as Paul talks about deacons, servants in the church in 1 Timothy, the New Testament uses this word loosely across the board to describe anyone who serves.

01:01:16

But by the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy, he was also talking about a specific, organized, a recognized office that had come to be established in the early church. Now as we're talking about all this, I think it's worth mentioning.

01:01:31

You may be sitting here, because I sat here this week as I was studying, and went, well, this is a little bit strange, right? Because we're spending all this time talking about a passage of scripture, talking about qualifications for deacons, but we're describing a role that, I don't know if anybody else noticed this, it doesn't exist at our church, right?

01:01:47

We don't have deacons at The Rock Community Church... yet. My hope, just sharing with you guys, my hope, personal hope, is that we would see deacon ministry come to be a reality at RockCC soon. So we have been praying about it, I've been talking a little bit with the elders about this, talking about what this looks like.

01:02:09

Hey, if God has established and laid out expectations for this role, well then maybe we should consider changing the structure of our church a little bit to reflect what we see in 1 Timothy. And so just, we have already been talking about this a little bit, we don't have it ready to kind of roll out the red carpet for you guys this morning, but we are praying about what this might look like at our church.

01:02:30

We are talking about what this might look like in our church. In fact, we're already watching and praying, looking around the room for people that God may have equipped and called to play this role in some way in our church.

01:02:43

So God might be preparing you to serve as a deacon to be ordained and called a servant to serve this local body. And we're gonna share more about what this looks like in the coming days, but while we figure all this out, as we chart the path forward for what this looks like to see deacons come to be a reality, at RockCC, my invitation for the end of our message tonight is a little bit today, excuse me, sorry, last night got me mixed up.

01:03:11

My invitation as we finish up here today is to invite you not to come down front, not to some action step in ways that many of our sermons end with, but it's rather an invitation to pray with me for our church.

01:03:27

I think we have two things that we can pray really clearly for in response to this passage of scripture. First, I think we should thank God for the fact that his perfect plan in providing different roles and different blessings and different giftings for different people in his church, I think we should thank God for his perfect plan and how he has established his church and put it all together so that it would work properly, work the way that he wants it to.

01:03:52

I think we should thank God for his perfect plan and I think we should also pray that RockCC would find biblically qualified men and women who would be prepared to step up and to serve as deacons in the coming days as this ministry starts to kind of come together.

01:04:07

I don't know if you've noticed it, but we have a lot of needs in our church in the same way that the early church did, that there's people who are hurting, that there's people that need help, there's people that need conversations, they need tangible help in different ways and in the same way that we saw Acts chapter six, talk about, hey, the apostles got together and said, guys, we need help, we need people who can step into these spaces and serve in some tangible way when the widows get hungrier, when different needs pop up in our church.

01:04:34

Well, our church has those same hurting people. We have those same needs pop up in our body and so we wanna be praying that God would raise up biblically qualified men and women who would be prepared to serve as deacons in the coming days.

01:04:48

So I wanna invite you now, just as we close in prayer, please remember those two requests and as you think about it this week or in the coming days, please be praying for our church that we would see God's structure for his church start to kind of take place in this church.

01:05:04

But would you guys pray with me now? God, we thank you for your word. God, we thank you for Paul's instructions to Timothy here in first Timothy chapter three, as he's talking about the responsibility and the characteristics of deacons, what they look like, how they should live, what they should be identified and marked by as people who are servants of the most high.

01:05:27

God, we thank you that you and your perfect sovereignty knew exactly how everything would work and how it would fit together. And God, you knew better than we did. God, we're not given the responsibility to figure out how to build a business model and take care of all these problems.

01:05:42

God, many of these things that we look at and go, oh, there's a problem here, you've given us the answers. And so we're so thankful for your perfect plan and the fact that you have laid things out for us just so beautifully that as the church, God is the people of God that we are given an opportunity to play some role in doing your work in the world.

01:06:05

God, that as you allow us to go and to be ministers, agents of reconciliation in the world, as we take the good news of the gospel of Jesus, of salvation like we talked about last week. God, as we have those opportunities to take that out into the world, God, we pray that we would live faithfully, that we would live the life that you've called us to, that we would live a life worthy of the calling that we have received.

01:06:27

And God, as we talk about this idea of servants in your church, God, we pray specifically for this body that you would raise up servants, men and women who are gifted and are called and are people who portray the character needed to be the deacons that you call us to be in 1 Timothy chapter three.

01:06:48

So God, we pray that you would raise men and women up to this role, God, that you would equip your church to do what you've called us to do. And God, we thank you in faith, knowing that you are exceedingly and abundantly capable of doing everything that you promise and so much more.

01:07:03

So God, we thank you in faith, knowing that you're gonna raise those men and women up. We thank you for all these things. We thank you for Jesus. And it's in his name we pray, amen.