

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 TIMOTHY 3 (PART 2)

1 TIMOTHY 3 DEALS WITH CHURCH LEADERSHIP ROLES AND THE CHARACTER REQUIRED AND QUALITIES SOUGHT AFTER IN THOSE WHO WILL FULFILL THOSE ROLES. THE FIRST PART OF THE CHAPTER FOCUSES ON THE OFFICE OF OVERSEER/ELDER/PASTOR AND THE SECOND HALF DESCRIBES THE ROLE OF A DEACON.

THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF THE DEACON IS A SPIRITUAL LEADER WHO FOCUSES ON SERVICE AND PHYSICAL NEEDS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY. ACTS 6 IS OFTEN CITED AS THE TEXT WHICH DESCRIBES THE ROLE OF A DEACON AS WELL AS ONE WHICH SHOWS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ELDERS AND DEACONS.

ACTS 6:1-7 - SEVEN MEN CHOSEN TO SERVE

NOTICE THAT THIS ROLE OF DEACON, WHILE FOCUSED ON PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL NEEDS OF THE CHURCH BODY, STILL IS A SPIRITUAL CALLING. WHILE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT QUALITIES ARE NEEDED (THESE MEN WERE GOING TO BE "PUT IN CHARGE" OF A TASK), THE APOSTLES MENTION LOOKING FOR MEN WHO HAVE "GOOD REPUTATION" AND ARE "FULL OF THE SPIRIT AND WISDOM (ACTS 6:3)." THE APOSTLES THEN PRAYED FOR THE SEVEN MEN SELECTED AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM, MEANING THEY WERE PRAYERFULLY AND SPIRITUALLY COMMISSIONED (ACTS 6:6). (WE LEARN MORE DETAIL ABOUT PHILLIP AND STEPHEN IN ACTS 7 & 8).

THE ORDAINING OF THESE SEVEN MEN WOULD ALLOW FOR THE APOSTLES TO RETURN TO DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO "PRAYER AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD (ACTS 6:4)". THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT WHILE THE 12 APOSTLES AND THE ELDERS THAT WOULD FOLLOW THEM OUGHT TO BE DEVOTED TO SERVING AND MINISTERING IN A GENERAL SENSE, THE ROLE OF THESE DEACONS WOULD BE TO HELP THESE LEADERS STAY FOCUSED ON WHAT THEY WERE UNIQUELY CALLED TO DO.

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13 - DEACONS

V. 8 - "DEACON" - COMES FROM THE GREEK WORD **διάκονος** (*DIAKONOS*) WHICH IS A WORD MEANING SERVANT. IT SEEMS THAT THE OFFICE OF DEACON COMES FROM THE CONCEPT OF SERVING. IT'S AS IF THE ROLE OF THE DEACON IS THE PERSONIFICATION OR EMBODIMENT OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. REMEMBER WHAT JESUS TAUGHT:

MATTHEW 20:25-26 - BUT JESUS CALLED THEM TO HIMSELF AND SAID, "YOU KNOW THAT THE RULERS OF THE GENTILES LORD IT OVER THEM, AND THEIR GREAT MEN EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THEM. 26 "IT IS NOT THIS WAY AMONG YOU, BUT WHOEVER WISHES TO BECOME GREAT AMONG YOU SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT (**διάκονος**).

WE KNOW PAUL PRIORITIZED THE APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS AS HE PLANTED CHURCHES DURING HIS MINISTRY - AND WE ALSO SEE FUNCTIONING DEACONS. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONS THIS IN HIS LETTER TO PHILIPPI:

PHILIPPIANS 1:1 - PAUL AND TIMOTHY, BOND-SERVANTS OF CHRIST JESUS, TO ALL THE SAINTS IN CHRIST JESUS WHO ARE IN PHILIPPI, INCLUDING THE OVERSEERS AND DEACONS...

TO BE SURE, ALL CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO BE SERVANTS. IN FACT, THE NEW TESTAMENT USES THE TERM "MINISTER" NOT JUST FOR A SELECT GROUP OF CLERGY, BUT FOR EVERY FOLLOWER OF JESUS. HERE IS WHAT PAUL SAYS ON THIS TOPIC:

EPHESIANS 4:11-12 (CSB) - AND HE HIMSELF GAVE SOME TO BE APOSTLES, SOME PROPHETS, SOME EVANGELISTS, SOME PASTORS AND TEACHERS,

(FOR WHAT PURPOSE?) → 12 EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY, TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST,

WE'RE ALL CALLED INTO MINISTRY! WE'RE ALL CALLED TO SERVE AND SPEAK AND GIVE AND REPRESENT CHRIST. AND AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS A SPECIAL CHURCH OFFICE FOR DEACONS, THOSE WHO ARE MORE FULLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO SUCH SERVICE AND WHO ARE CALLED BY THE CHURCH AND SET APART IN THIS WAY.

SO WHAT OUGHT THE CHURCH LOOK FOR IN THEIR DEACONS? PAUL IS GOING TO GIVE A DETAILED DESCRIPTION. JUST AS WE SAW WITH ELDERS, THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST BUT IT DOES GIVE A WONDERFUL PICTURE OF WHAT OUR CHURCH LEADERS SHOULD LOOK LIKE. THESE ARE QUALITIES THAT ARE NOT ONE AND DONE BUT A STANDARD TO BE HELD UP TO CONTINUALLY AND CONSISTANTLY MODELED.

MEN OF DIGNITY - THIS MEANS HONORABLE, RESPECTED AND SERIOUS. OXFORD DICTIONARY SAYS "THE STATE OR QUALITY OF BEING WORTHY OF HONOR OR RESPECT." HOW A DEACON LIVES, ACTS AND SPEAKS SHOULD BE DIGNIFIED AND RESPECTED BY OTHERS.

NOT DOUBLE TONGUED - NOT δῖλογος (DIALOGOS), LITERALLY MEANING "TWO (ΔΙ) WORDS (ΛΟΓΟΣ)". THIS SPEAKS TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE DEACON. THEY SAY WHAT THEY MEAN AND MEAN WHAT THEY SAY. THEY DON'T SAY ONE THING TO ONE GROUP AND SOMETHING ELSE TO ANOTHER. THIS WOULD PROHIBIT DECEIT, HYPOCRISY, FAVORITISM, AND UNGODLY FLATTERY.

THINK ABOUT HOW IMPORTANT THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE CARE FOR THE HEBREW AND GREEK WIDOWS IN ACTS 6.

ONE NOTABLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS AND DEACONS IS THAT ELDERS ARE "ABLE TO TEACH." AS WE DISCUSSED LAST TIME, THIS REFERS TO FORMAL TEACHING AND ALSO ONE ON ONE INSTRUCTION. DEACONS CERTAINLY WOULD KNOW THE GOSPEL AND THE SCRIPTURES, BUT THEIR ROLE IS NOT IN TEACHING AND INSTRUCTION. THIS CONNECTS BACK TO THE ACTS 6 RECORD WHERE THE APOSTLES WERE DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO THE "MINISTRY OF THE WORD (ACTS 6:4)".

Q - WHY IS DIGNITY AND INTEGRITY AN IMPORTANT VIRTUE FOR SOMEONE LEADING AND SERVING THE CHURCH?

NOT ADDICTED TO MUCH WINE - (NOT ADDICTED TO A LITTLE WINE EITHER). THIS IS SIMILAR TO THE CHARACTERISTIC OF ELDERS (V.3), BUT IT IS ACTUALLY A DIFFERENT GREEK PHRASE. THE WORD USED FOR ELDERS WAS πάροινος (PARO-INOS) WHICH MEANS DRUNKEN AND/OR GIVEN TO HEAVY DRINKING. THE WORD USED FOR DEACONS IS (IRONICALLY) προσέχω (PROS-ECHE) WHICH SPEAKS OF HAVING ONE'S ATTENTION TOWARDS SOMETHING. IN THE NASB IT IS TRANSLATED ADDICTED (1X), BEWARE(8X), GIVE OR PAY ATTENTION(9X). SO CERTAINLY A CHURCH LEADER SHOULDN'T BE A DRUNKARD OR GET DRUNK, OR BE ADDICTED TO WINE, ETC - BUT, THEY ARE ALSO CAUTIONED ABOUT GIVING THEIR ATTENTION TO THESE THINGS AS WELL, WHICH MAY BE DISPROPORTIONATE TO ONE'S ACTUAL CONSUMPTION.

NOT FOND OF SORDID GAIN - ONE GREEK WORD (αἰσχροκερδής AIS-CHRO-KER-DES). DEACONS SHOULDN'T BE GREEDY. SORDID IMPLIES SKETCHY, SLEAZY OR DISHONEST. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT QUALITY AS IT RELATES TO THE CHURCH AND ALSO PERSONAL AND BUSINESS LIFE.

HOLDING THE MYSTERY OF FAITH WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE - "THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH IS A REFERENCE TO THE REVEALED TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (NET BIBLE)." THIS IDEA OF "THE MYSTERY" IS FREQUENTLY USED BY PAUL TO SPEAK OF GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION. "WHILE DEACONS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO BE ABLE TO TEACH, THEY ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE A GOOD GRASP OF THE GOSPEL, AND THEIR BEHAVIOR IS TO BE

CONSISTENT WITH THE GOSPEL (ESV STUDY BIBLE, 1 TIMOTHY 3:9)." THIS IS AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTIVE OF DEACONS - GOD IS NOT JUST LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WITH A HEART TO SERVE, BE BUSY WITH CHURCH ACTIVITY AND DOING "THINGS". THERE IS A UNIQUELY CHRISTIAN FLAVOR TO THIS SERVICE - BUT IN THE WAY THEY ARE SERVING (LIKE CHRIST) AND THE THINGS THEY ARE SERVING IN.

THESE MEN MUST ALSO FIRST BE TESTED, THEN LET THEM SERVE AS DEACONS - THIS IS SIMILAR TO THE CALL FOR ELDERS TO NOT BE "NEW CONVERTS" OR "NEW PLANTINGS." BEFORE SOMEONE IS APPOINTED AS A DEACON, THEY MUST BE PROVEN. THIS DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN TESTING AS IN GO THROUGH TRIALS/HARD TIMES, BUT MORE OF GOING THROUGH A PERIOD OF PROVING THEMSELVES AND DEMONSTRATING A CONSISTENCY OF GODLY CHARACTER.

Q - WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH SEE IN A TESTED DEACON?

THEN LET THEM SERVE AS DEACONS OF THEY ARE BEYOND REPROACH - SIMILAR PHRASE USED OF ELDERS (3:2). THIS WORD IS OFTEN USED IN THE NT ABOUT "CHARGES" OR "ACCUSATIONS" BROUGHT BEFORE A COURT/MAGISTRATE. DEACONS ARE TO LIVE LIVES THAT ARE DEEMED INNOCENT IN MATTERS OF EVIL AND SIN.

WOMEN (DEACONS) MUST LIKEWISE BE DIGNIFIED - VERSE 11 BRINGS US TO CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WHO SERVE AS DEACONS. WHILE WE SEE NO SPECIFIC GUIDANCE IN THIS LETTER REGARDING WOMEN ELDERS, WE DO HAVE SPECIFIC GUIDANCE ABOUT WOMEN DEACONS, (ALSO KNOWN AS DEACONESSSES). (SOME INTERPRET THIS TO BE SPEAKING OF THE WIVES OF DEACONS, BUT THE WORD "LIKEWISE" OFTEN IS USED TO SPEAK OF A SEPARATE GROUP. AND THERE IS NO CORRESPONDING INSTRUCTION FOR ELDER'S WIVES.) FURTHER, PAUL WILL CONCLUDE HIS LETTER TO THE ROMAN CHURCH MENTIONING A DEACONESS BY NAME:

ROMANS 16:1-2 - I COMMEND TO YOU OUR SISTER PHOEBE, WHO IS A SERVANT (διάκονος) OF THE CHURCH WHICH IS AT CENCHREA; 2 THAT YOU RECEIVE HER IN THE LORD IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE SAINTS, AND THAT YOU HELP HER IN WHATEVER MATTER SHE MAY HAVE NEED OF YOU; FOR SHE HERSELF HAS ALSO BEEN A HELPER OF MANY, AND OF MYSELF AS WELL.

LIKE DEACONS, DEACONESSSES OUGHT TO BE DIGNIFIED (HONORABLE, RESPECTED, SERIOUS).

NOT MALICIOUS GOSSIPS - DEACONS WERE TOLD TO REJECT DOUBLE TALK AND DEACONESSSES MUST REJECT MALICIOUS GOSSIP. THIS IS ONE GREEK WORD διάβολος (DIA-BOLOS) WHICH IS TRANSLATED DEVIL 34X! IT COMMUNICATES THE IDEA OF A SLANDERER AND ACCUSER. A SLANDERER (OR MALICIOUS GOSSIP) SPEAKS EVIL ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON AND WORDS WHICH DAMAGE ANOTHER PERSON'S REPUTATION.

TEMPERATE - THIS WORD WAS ALSO USED OF ELDERS (3:2) ESV: "SOBER-MINDED" NLT "SELF-CONTROLLED". SOMEONE WHO IS TEMPERATE HAS AN EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE THAT IS JUST RIGHT - NOT BOILING OVER, NOT FREEZING COLD. THEY ARE REASONABLE RATHER THAN EXTREME. MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINED TEMPERATE AS IT RELATES TO TEMPERATURE AS "HAVING A MODERATE CLIMATE WHICH ESPECIALLY LACKS EXTREMES IN TEMPERATURE."

LIKE ELDERS, DEACONESSSES ARE CALLED TO HAVE GODLY CONTROL AND CONSISTENCY WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR WORDS, ACTIONS AND EMOTIONS. TEMPERANCE IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP QUALITY - ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE SERVING CLOSELY WITH PEOPLE IN NEED.

FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS - FAITHFUL, RELIABLE, TRUSTWORTHY IN ALL/EVERY THING. THE CALL TO BE A DEACON IS NOT A PART TIME ROLE TO FULFILL ON SUNDAY MORNINGS - IT IS A HIGH CALLING AND OFFICE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH REQUIRES NOT ONLY FAITHFULNESS IN THE SERVICE, BUT IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE.

THINK ABOUT THE MEN CALLED IN ACTS 6 - OF A GOOD REPUTATION, FULL OF THE SPIRIT AND WISDOM. HAVING THEIR LIVES IN ORDER IN SEEMINGLY NON-SPIRITUAL MATTERS IS GOING TO AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO BE YOUR BEST IN OBVIOUSLY SPIRITUAL MATTERS.

DEACONS MUST BE THE HUSBAND OF ONLY ONE WIFE, GOOD MANAGERS OF THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR OWN HOUSEHOLD - LIKE THE CALLING ON AN ELDER, A DEACON MUST BE FAITHFUL IN THEIR MARRIAGE AND IN THEIR PARENTAL ROLE. AGAIN, THE WORD HERE IS OF A MANAGER, ONE WHO IS OVERSEEING AND INTENTIONALLY LEADING. A PATTERNED NEGLECT OF ONE'S HOME IN SERVICE OF THE CHURCH IS A MINISTRY DISQUALIFIER. CONTRASTLY, A GOOD AND HEALTHY HOME LIFE IS ONE OF THE GREATEST AREAS FOR TRAINING IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. IN PAUL'S LETTER ON ELDERS AND DEACONS TO TITUS, HE WILL ENCOURAGE THE OLDER MEN AND WOMEN TO INTENTIONALLY INVEST IN THE YOUNGER GENERATION HELPING THEM NAVIGATE LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD, AS WELL AS LIFE AS A SPOUSE AND PARENT. (SEE TITUS 2).

1 TIMOTHY 3:13 - HONOR TO THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED WELL AS DEACONS...

IF ANYONE WOULD BE TEMPTED TO THINK THAT A DEACON IS JUST DOING PHYSICAL WORK OR DEALING WITH NEEDS SO THAT ELDERS CAN DO THE IMPORTANT STUFF, PAUL CONCLUDES THIS LIST WITH A CLEAR COMMENDATION TO DEACONS.

1 TIMOTHY 3:13 (NLT) - THOSE WHO DO WELL AS DEACONS WILL BE REWARDED WITH RESPECT FROM OTHERS AND WILL HAVE INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.

SIMILAR TO ELDERS, WE OUGHT TO PRAY FOR THOSE SERVING IN A DEACON ROLE (AND FOR MORE DEACONS TO RISE UP AND BE CALLED OUT). THOSE SERVING IN A DEACON'S ROLE OUGHT TO REVIEW THESE VIRTUES AND PRAY FOR A CONTINUED HEART LIKE THE ONE WHO THEY ARE ULTIMATELY IN THE SERVICE OF.

PAUL SAYS THAT THOSE WHO SERVE WELL AS DEACONS ARE WORTHY OF OUR RESPECT AND HONOR AND THAT THOSE WHO SERVE AS DEACONS OUGHT TO GAIN CONFIDENCE IN THEIR STANDING BEFORE CHRIST AS A RESULT OF THEIR FAITHFUL SERVICE - NOT JUST TO HIS PEOPLE, BUT TO HIM! REMEMBER, JESUS SAID IT IS THOSE WHO SERVE THAT ARE THE GREATEST.