

Deacons: Promoting Unity through Service

Acts 6.1-4, 1 Timothy 3.8-13

Main Idea

Deacons promote the unity of the church through the means of practical service to the body so that the Pastors can effectively work at the ministry of the word and prayer.

Overview

Deacons Promote the Unity of the church through Service: Role of the Deacon: Acts 6.1-4

- Acts 6.1-4: There is a complaint about favoritism in the life the church in the daily distribution to widows:
 - The Apostles are spent on physical service such that they cannot properly give themselves to the more important task of serving the spiritual needs of the church through the ministry of the word and prayer
 - The Apostles call for seven Servants (Deacons) to facilitate the distribution of the daily bread so that the Apostles could give more of themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer (Acts 6.4)
- By creating this service two things occur:
 - Unity in the body is preserved by having seven men own the practical need of distribution in a way that is consistent, therein preserving the unity of the church
 - The Apostles are alleviated from this task thereby creating more time for them to important task of the ministry of the word and prayer
 - This is the role of the deacon in the life of the church

Deacons are men/women of Christ like Character: Character of the Deacon: 1 Timothy 3.8, 11:

- In 1 Timothy 3 we find Paul laying out the character qualifications of a Deacon:
 - These character qualities are taken from the character of God
 - They also are unique to the kinds of things needed to excel in the office of Deacon given the nature of the work
- There are 8 qualities required:
 - Dignified: Means “Grave” or honorable, respectful, esteemed
 - Christ was on a mission and this informed His pervasive Dignity
 - Not Double Tongued: Honest:
 - Christ was honest and it got Him murdered...all Christians, but especially their leaders should be known for their honesty
 - Not addicted to much wine: Christians and their leaders should not be controlled by spirits, but only by the Holy Spirit which doesn’t allow for drunkenness
 - Not Greedy for Dishonest Gain: Deacons should be inclined to serve, not be served. Just as Christ
 - Blameless: Means “above reproach”. Their reputation should be able to rise above accusation
 - These next ones were under “the wives of deacons”:
 - Since there is are qualifications of a female officer in the church that we don’t see under the office of Elder we can see that females can be Deacons since it is also clear that the office of Deacon doesn’t require them to handle the Scriptures which is the tool of Authority in the church:
 - Not Slanderers: Since Deacons are to be promoting unity through service they cannot destroy others and create disunity with their words (1 Peter 2.1)
 - Sober Minded: Deacons should not be prone to huge emotional shifts up and down, but they should have a general hold on their affections that is measured and consistent

- Faithful in All things: A general catch all phrase that denotes the Deacon, like Christians in general, should be dependable, reliable, trustworthy in their lives

Deacons are Tested: Testing of the Deacon: 1 Tim. 3.10, 12

- Since Deacons will be handling the resources/assets of the church as well as representing the church they should be tested so as to make certain they are not only competent, but most importantly able to handle the office in a Christ like manner
- The family, if they have one, is the smaller “church” therefore they should excel there if they are going to excel in the larger church family

Deacons are Firm in the Faith: The Faith of the Deacon: 1 Tim. 3.9

- Deacons must hold ‘firm’ the mystery of the Faith
- “Mystery of the Faith” is further explained in vs. 16: Seems to indicate a firm hold on the Person and work of Christ that was prophesied in the OT:
 - All that Jesus is and does is “mysterious” not in that we believe it by “blind faith” but in that there is more meaning there than our finite minds can comprehend
 - Deacons must embrace that ‘mystery’ and enjoy it...holding firm to it

Deacons are Rewarded: The Reward of the Deacon: 1 Tim. 3.13

- Great Standing and Great Confidence in the Faith that is In Christ is given to the Deacon because the nature of a Deacon’s responsibilities mirror the nature of Christ’s ministry

Questions

Discussion Starter: *Take some time to consider the numerous ways that a Deacons ministry (setting things up, preparing things in advance, etc.) allows you to come in on a Sunday morning and just get into the business of worshiping and fellowshiping in the Lord.*

1. Read Acts 6.1-4. Explain the issue the church is facing. What is at stake in this problem? What does the institution of this office do for the church?
2. Discuss how people that serve practical needs help (a) Pastors be able to devote themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer and (b) promote unity in the Body as a whole.
3. Read 1 Timothy 3.8-13. Work through the character qualities in two ways:
 - a. Discuss how they reflect the nature of God and the person of Christ.
 - b. Discuss how they are needed for the task of being a Deacon (i.e. how do they promote unity?).
4. How are you encouraged by others in your group regarding these character qualities? Identify specific evidences of grace.
5. What areas could you use prayer in seeing improvement in these character qualities?
6. Explain what it means that deacons “must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” Why is this necessary for Deacons? What does this look like? How does one promote it?
7. Why would Deacons be said to receive good standing and great confidence in the faith of Christ for having served as a Deacon?
8. Pray for our current Deacons and for future Deacons as the elders consider adding more deaconate positions.

Accountability Question: *Whether or not you are a Deacon, how do you see these things describing you? Our church as a whole? Pray appropriately.*