

Honor God in Your Service
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1 Timothy 3:8-13; 4:6-16

Opening Question: What are some places of business (ex: restaurants; grocery stores; other retail stores; service businesses) that you would drive out of your way to patronize? What sets them apart to make you feel that way?

Colossians 3:17 (ESV) tells us...

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Verse 23 says...

23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

Just as we highly value businesses and professionals who operate at a higher standard of service and excellence, those of us who serve God in the church are held to a HIGHER STANDARD. A standard that is prescribed by scripture.

Today's scripture in 1 Timothy chapters 3 and 4 is aimed at church leaders, specifically DEACONS and the PASTOR. This passage speaks to us in a couple of ways:

1. It gives scriptural understanding of the roles of deacons and pastors to help us in discerning what God's standards are for those roles.
2. It challenges every believer in OUR roles in ministry, to hold ourselves to similar standards.

Let's begin in chapter 3 verses 8-13 on the qualifications for deacons.

1 Timothy 3:8–13 (ESV)

Qualifications for Deacons

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 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.

- **Okay, Bible scholars, what does the Greek word for DEACON mean?**
- **How does that differ from the perception most people have of what a deacon does?**
- Let's look at each characteristic in these verses we just read:
- Verse 8 - **Dignified. What do you think that means? Top hat and tails? Stuffy?**
- Various translations: "Worthy of respect;" NKJV = "reverent"; "worth imitating."
- A deacon, though not perfect, should be a ROLE MODEL of Christian living.

- I would contend that being a ROLE MODEL is NOT just limited to DEACONS!
- **“Not double-tongued,” what does that mean?**
- What’s the old expression from the cowboy movies? ‘He speaks with a _____ tongue.’ Another, “Talking out of both _____ of his mouth.”
- As for gossip, let’s get real for a minute. **When discussing others do you ever struggle as to when conversation slips from information/concern into gossip?**
- *If someone will gossip WITH YOU about someone; they’ll gossip ABOUT YOU too!*
- “Not addicted to much wine” Not much to add to that. Don’t get drunk!
- Why would it be a problem for a church leader to be seen drunk?
- **How could a church leader be wrongly accused of drunkenness?**
- “Not greedy for dishonest gain” Not a “crook” who steals.
- Verse 9 is important: “They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”
- **What do you think that means?**

Warren Wiersbe writes:

“The great doctrines of the faith are hidden to those outside the faith, but they can be understood by those who trust the Lord. Deacons must understand Christian doctrine and obey it with a good conscience. It is not enough to sit in meetings and decide how to “run the church.” They must base their decisions on the Word of God, and they must back up their decisions with godly lives.”

- Sadly, some church leaders are more focused on the church constitution and by laws than they are on scripture.
- Some of you have heard me share a story from my youth.
- Deacons must be BIBLICALLY FOCUSED in their LIFE and MINISTRY.
- **Verse 10 says “let them be tested first; then let them serve as deacons.” Why?**
- **What does that mean regarding new Christians having a role in church?**
- Verse 11 - Someone read that verse aloud, please.
- Full disclosure: Some scholars say this could mean not only the spouse of a deacon but either women deacons or a group of women who assisted the deacons. For our discussion let’s talk about it in the context of a spouse.
- **Why bring the deacons wives into this? [Dave Ramsey hiring story.]**

Those of us who have been blessed with wonderful spouses, know the same thing those who picked a bad one know: Our spouse can either ENHANCE everything we do in our work and ministry or DESTROY everything we do in our work and ministry.

- Verse 12 says the deacon is to be the “husband of one wife.” Much debated verse.
- **What do YOU think it means?**
- Several interpretations: Can’t be a polygamist; Can’t be divorced and remarried.
- The literal Greek translation is a “one woman man” (Also a country music title!)

John MacArthur writes: "This says nothing about marriage or divorce [more on that in a minute]. The issue is not...marital status, but...moral and sexual purity. This qualification leads the list, because it is in this area that leaders are most prone to fail."

- **Back to verse 12. What else does that verse say deacons must BE?**
- Simply put, if you can't manage your home how can you lead the church?
- **Question: What if a godly man is qualified in all the other ways but has a rebellious, trouble-making child?**
- One more word about the question of divorce. What if someone has a divorce in their past? What if they were divorced and remarried before they were saved? Or had a divorce as permitted by scripture (adultery or abandonment by their spouse)?
- Quoting MacArthur again:
- *"If there has been a biblically permitted divorce, it must have been so far in the past as to have been overcome by a long pattern of solid family leadership and the rearing of godly children."*
- My thought: Church leaders must decide each case with prayer and discernment.
- **Verse 13 - What is the result of living the way Paul described?**
- "...high standing" and "great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."
- We could call that a life that GLORIFIES GOD.
- Chapter 4. The first five verses revisit the danger of false teaching and bad doctrine.
- Then beginning in verse 6, Paul turns back to Timothy as the pastor. Verse 6:

1 Timothy 4:6–16 (ESV)

6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

- Verse 6 tells Timothy how to be a "good servant" or "good minister" of Christ.
- "Put these things" could mean preaching against false doctrine mentioned just above, or could refer to this whole letter.
- **What are some examples of distracting and unbiblical ideas we might hear today from false teachers? Is it best to tolerate, ignore, or confront bad teaching? Explain.**
- Paul challenged Timothy to preach SOUND DOCTRINE, while not shying away from CHALLENGING BAD DOCTRINE.
- **What else does verse 6 say a pastor should be? What word does your translation use? NASB: "nourished"- why is that a GOOD WORD?**
- A pastor can't lead effectively unless they are NOURISHED constantly by God's word. "You ARE what you EAT!"
- **Ever hear of a side effect of eating too many carrots?**
- Carotenemia is usually caused by excessive consumption of carrots, green vegetables and citrus fruits (beta carotene).
- Eating too many carrots can change your appearance. Being nourished in the scripture can change your whole life!

7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. [Again, avoid and stamp out FALSE TEACHING] Rather train yourself for godliness;

8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

- Physical training is GOOD. But, be just as FANATICAL about TRAINING FOR GODLINESS. [The parking lot at LIFETIME FITNESS on the way to church.]
- **What specific actions can you and I schedule into our daily lives to nurture our godliness?**
- **Verse 8 - What does that verse say is the DOUBLE VALUE of training for godliness?**

9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

- Pull out a pen and let's finish up by marking some key terms in verses 11-16.
- Underline the ACTION STEPS Paul gave Timothy.
- **What are the ACTION WORDS in verse 10 (why)? 11? 12? 13? 14? 15? 16?**
- Be careful about verse 16. Doing all these things DOESN'T EARN salvation!
- Paul made it clear elsewhere that SALVATION is GRACE ALONE, by FAITH ALONE, in CHRIST ALONE. (Eph. 2:8) **So what do you think Paul meant?**
- If a pastor "persists" in living like this, he serves as an EXAMPLE that will attract those who need to be saved and to ENCOURAGE sanctification (spiritual growth) among those who ARE saved.
- **Although these qualifications and instructions apply to pastors and deacons, why are they important for all Christians?**
- **Looking back over the things we've marked in our Bibles and the qualifications of a deacon earlier, what are one or two areas you want to focus on THIS WEEK to take your service for God to ANOTHER LEVEL?**

So, What's the TAKEAWAY?

- These passages give us the scriptural STANDARDS for pastors and deacons. A measuring stick regarding those roles.
 - These standards also apply to all of us in whatever ministry role God has called us to.
- Kay Arthur writes:

"The conduct Paul calls for in Timothy, and in you and me, is produced by constant exposure to the Word of God. As I spend time in the Word of God, I begin to believe God and see the character of God. The result is a walk that honors God."

- We all need to remember: "...godliness is profitable for ALL things, having promise of the life that NOW is AND of that which is to come." (4:8 - emphasis mine)