

## **Christ's Design for His Church, Part V - Deacons**

As we just heard Brother \_\_\_\_\_ read in verses 8 and 9 the first five qualities of a person who fulfills the office of Deacon are he is to “be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain ... hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” As I listened to the Word of God being read it was easy for me to think of David. He is a man who loves the Lord and serves Him well. This section of scriptures continues in verse 11 with, “Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.” Cheryl fulfills this well. Canyon Bible is blessed to have David and Cheryl, for they love the Lord and have servant hearts.

Beyond deacons and their wives, beyond David and Cheryl, God calls every believer to live with a deep love of Christ and to have a servant's heart. **The deeper one's love of Christ grows the bigger their servant heart grows.** So, let me ask, “How is each person here serving? Are you serving within our church? Are you serving in the local outreach of Canyon Bible: CareNet, Camp Oro Quay and the East Mountain Food Pantry? Are you sharing the Gospel of ‘Good News’ of our Lord Jesus Christ with the lost?” As we work our way through Paul's writing to Timothy this morning you should be asking yourself, “How does God want me and my family to serve?”

### **Heart of Truth**

When we read chapter 3 and we observe that the qualifications listed, whether for a person serving as Elder or Deacon, these qualifications revolve around the category of truth. Then as a general rule we can simplify what Paul is saying in these verses concerned with qualifications for men in these offices; the Lord is

looking at the person's heart and the truth in their lives. So, the question is, is their heart true to God? The qualifications are all about whom we really are, the truth of our heart. These qualifications have to do with the person's spiritual life more than their talent or effort or even willingness. I appreciate that it is not just about my talent, which at times is lacking, but mainly about my heart, my love of Christ and my love for all of you.

When we ask the question, "What kind of person is God looking for in spiritual leadership?" We can begin to answer this question by studying the Word of God and looking at the history of redemption. Going back to the Old Testament we are met by a man we know by the name of Abram who God named Abraham. When God called Abram to be the leader of Israel, God looked at his heart. He chose the man Abram and He blessed him. In Nehemiah chapter 9, verses 7 and 8 we read, "You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and took him from Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. <sup>8</sup> You found that his heart was faithful to you." **The qualification for leadership that God recognized in Abraham was a heart that was faithful and a willingness to be obedient.**

The Lord sent Samuel, His servant; to look among the sons of a man named Jesse for the new king. He was to identify one of Jesse's sons as the next king of Israel. The Lord gave Samuel a standard by which to measure his choice. In 1 Samuel 16:7a, God said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature." The reason God said this to Samuel was because this is precisely the measuring standard that had been used to choose the king prior to David, a man by the name of Saul. In 1 Samuel 9:2 it says, "Saul was a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people." It was on that basis Saul was chosen to be king. He turned out to be a disastrous and evil king. So God says to Samuel, when you choose the next king, look **not** on his face or on the

height of his stature. God tells Samuel, “For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7b) God tells Samuel – look at the heart of the man – this will reveal the truth of the man.

God chose Abraham because of his faithful heart and God chose David because of his faithful heart. God gave David a son, Solomon. As David prepared to pass the throne to Solomon he gave his son these words of advice, “Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.” (1 Chronicles 28:9) King David understood that serving God well was based on the condition of one’s heart.

I often think of the Apostle Paul and I like to study his techniques of leadership. I like to look at the marvelous characteristics of his manhood, his strength of courage and conviction. When Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:10, he lays his finger on the real key to his effectiveness when he reminds the Thessalonians that his behavior was three things: holy, just and blameless. These are outward evidences of Paul’s heart. Therein lies the usefulness and effectiveness of the man, his passion to serve Christ built upon a spiritually true heart.

Now such passages point out to us that when the Lord looks for a man or a woman to place them in spiritual service and use them with maximum effectiveness, He looks at their spiritual dimension, their spiritual condition, He looks into their heart. That is the true issue. When God chooses people for service, He chooses integrity. He chooses purity. He chooses virtue. He chooses those with a heart that loves Christ. So when you come to 1 Timothy chapter 3 Paul is writing to Timothy who is working in the church at Ephesus and endeavoring to place men in

leadership. The key issues Paul addresses are spiritual – the condition of men’s hearts towards Christ. All of the qualifications given in these 13 verses, whether for overseers or servants in the church, whether for elders or deacons, revolve around spiritual qualification. They are about the condition of the heart, with the purity of life, with virtue, with integrity, with honesty, with uprightness, with holiness and with blamelessness.

In fact, if we went quickly through 1 Timothy and we would see how many different places there are in this epistle where Paul speaks to the issue of a holy life, of a pure life, of a godly life, of a blameless life, of a righteous life, of a heart that loves Christ and we would see just how important these are to Paul. In every chapter; chapter 1 through chapter 6 we see constantly Paul’s call to live holy. **It is of major importance to Paul that godliness and virtue be maintained by the men who lead the Church.**

You may remember that the Lord had chosen to take away Saul’s position as king over Israel. In 1 Samuel 13:14 God tells Samuel of David, “**The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people.**” What does this mean, “**a man after his own heart?**” That is a man who thinks like God thinks, who feels like He feels, who responds like He responds, a man with a heart that beats like Christ's heart, whose heart loves righteousness and hates sin, whose heart loves the sinner but rejects his deeds, a heart that reaches out in mercy to those who are hurting, a heart that cares, a heart that knows righteousness and obedience, a heart that is consumed with the extending of the Father's glory. That is the kind of heart both God the Father and Christ the Son have and this is what they want in their servant leaders. This is the heart David and I desire.

In Ezekiel 22 and verse 30 God said, “**I sought for a man among them who should**

build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land.” God looked for a man to stand in His place and to represent Him on earth. At that time there was not one for Israel had become wicked and had turned from God. God has always sought men with faithful hearts, first Abraham, then David and others and in all of these men, what we see in the scriptures is God has always sought those with His heart. In fact, in Acts 13:22 it says, “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.” David failed at times but he sought God through it all. Where men often failed Christ did not. Now by the power of the Holy Spirit given to us when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior we are able to serve God and keep His name holy before an unholy world. You see, beloved, what God wants in church leadership is virtue and spiritual character, that is, men with a heart like God’s. That is the key to what God and Paul wants us to understand. It is a lot to live up to, but it is what God says is necessary.

### **Heart of a Servant**

Examining 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 8 in more detail, we first see the introduction of the office of Deacon. The word deacon can be translated as the word “Servant.” Up to this point in the scriptures the word “diakonos” is used for one who is serving or is a servant of his master. Paul now introduces the office of Deacon. So, here the word “diakonos” is rightly translated as “Servant” with a capital “S” or as in many translations Deacon with a capital “D”. The word is gender neutral, neither male nor female. There is no word in the scriptures of “deaconesses” only deacon. We know that the office of Deacon is to be fulfilled by spiritually qualified men by the qualifier found in verses 11 and 12, “Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup> Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.” We already spent time defining “the husband of one wife” in our study of the qualifications of elders. This qualification is the

same for both Elder and Deacon.

Verse 8 begins with “[Deacons likewise must.](#)” The word “[likewise](#)” means the same as the prior subject, that of overseers or elders. The spiritual qualifications for deacons are much the same as elders. They are to be “[dignified](#)” meaning they are to lead lives that give honor to God, lives where people can observe them and have an awe that they are living holy in this world that it racked with unholiness. God emphasized that those who are in positions of leadership are to be men of integrity, men of honor and men whose hearts seek after God. Paul begins with this positive trait of spiritual dignity and then continues with three negatives.

Reading from verse 8, “[Deacons likewise must ... not be double-tongued.](#)” What does it mean to be double-tongued? This is the only place in the Scriptures where this word, “*dilogos*” or “[double-tongued](#)” appears. It is simply what it says, two tongued. Now what is a two-tongued person? The best way to describe this is to refer to a person who says one thing to one person and something different to another. In other words a double tongued person is telling me something and someone else something quite the opposite of that in order to gain his own personal goals. The idea here is integrity of speech. Because those who serve in the church are privy to private matters, because they know well very grave spiritual issues, because they are dealing with things that people would like to keep private in their own lives, because they are a part of spiritual warfare at very intense levels, they need to be the kind of people who know how to speak, when they should speak and to speak with integrity whenever they do speak. There is always a high premium on verbal honesty and integrity among spiritual leaders.

Verse 8 continues with the second negative, “[Deacons likewise must ... not be addicted to much wine.](#)” The Greek would literally says, “not holding near much wine.” One might ask, “Why doesn't scripture just say not holding wine at **all**?”

Well because wine was a matter of a common drink, but not to be abused. One could also ask, “How can a man make wise decisions and be the spiritual support to others if he drinks to the point he is not in sound mind?” **The scriptures teach balance, moderation and proper order by placing service to Christ first and to others second.** A man who drinks to the point of intoxication is self-serving and not a man who is in control. We saw what happened to Noah when he made it to dry land and drank too much. He embarrassed himself and his sons, but more importantly he was embarrassed before God. The scriptures teach moderation, they teach keeping ones mind on God. The present active nature of the participle in this verse means this is to be his habitual practice. Habitually he is to be known as a person who is not holding near much wine. In other words, he is a man, who basically does not allow drink to influence his life.

Verse 8 continues with the third negative, “**Deacons likewise must ... not be greedy for dishonest gain.**” Why does Paul make this point? Well, because in Paul’s time, the men who served in the church, in an official capacity, would be handling money and gift offerings. They would be passing out money to widows, orphans and to needy people. They would be managing collections of tithes and gifts. There were no bank accounts and there were no CPA audit firms. Everything was a cash transaction and the people who handled the money actually had a purse on their belt and in it was the church’s money. The temptation would always be there to stick your hand in the bag and use the money for your own purposes. So, these men had to be people who were not motivated by money and who were free from the love of it.

Remember Mary poured the expensive oil out onto Jesus and Judas was upset. The Apostle John wrote, “**Judas Iscariot, one of his Christ’s disciples (he who was about to betray him), said,** <sup>5</sup> ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ <sup>6</sup> He said this, not because he cared about the poor,

but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.” (John 12:4-6) This is exactly the type of problem Paul was addressing; the love of money has been and continues to be the downfall of many. The fallen world relishes corruption within the church because they then can say the church is no different from the world. They can continue living in their corruption and not be made to feel guilty. Therefore, in order for the church to be the witness Christ has called it to be, it must avoid corruption and remain holy.

### **Heart of Faith**

Now we continue by going a little deeper; we are not talking just about personal characteristics but spiritual life. In verse 9, the person who serves in the role of Deacon or official servant in the church is one holding “the mystery of the faith with a clear or pure conscience.” The word “mystery” means something that was hidden and is not revealed. In fact Paul gives the definition of mystery in detail in Ephesians chapter 3. For example, from chapter 3, Paul wrote of the Gospel of Christ, saying, it brought “to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known...” (Ephesians 3:9-10) The mystery of the faith is that truth which was hidden and is now revealed. Therefore, it is New Testament revelation; that which was hidden from the past generations before the coming of Christ. **The scriptures are the sacred things of God hidden from the natural reason of men and made known only by His revelation.**

So basically what “mystery of the faith” means is Christian doctrine, New Testament theology, truth, revelation of Christ and His doctrine. It encompasses the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, which was hidden and is now revealed, the mystery of the indwelling Christ, of the Jew and Gentile being one in Christ, of the saving gospel and the mystery of the Rapture of the Church. It is New



Testament revelation. From the first book of Matthew to the last book of Revelation is the unveiling of the hidden truth now revealed in the New Testament.

The Deacon must hold to New Testament revelation. He has to be a New Testament doctrinally focused man who knows and understands truth revealed in the scriptures. This is of great concern to Paul. All the way through his epistles he makes a major point of sound doctrine and good teaching.

The spiritual character of a man who serves as Deacon begins with his spiritual life, with an affirmation of New Testament doctrine. He holds to the mystery of true faith! True faith simply means the content of Christian truth found only in the Bible. But also notice in verse 9 the holding of the “[mystery of the faith](#)” requires something. It requires a clear or pure conscience! This is really the key – living faith with a clear or pure conscience. What does that mean? It means a conscience that is not accusing you. It means a conscience that is not bringing guilt on you. Why? Because you are holding to God’s truth and you are obeying that truth.

Let me say something that I hope will be helpful to you. [Strong theology develops strong conscience. The more one understands the Bible and grows in faith and belief, the stronger one’s conscience becomes.](#) When a person who really has strong doctrine and strong theology developed by holding to the mystery of the faith with great strength violates that doctrine, they have a very strong conscience reprimanding them. On the other hand show me a person who is weak in conviction and I will show you a person with a weak conscience. Because conscience reacts to the body of truth the person is committed to. If one is not committed to truth, their conscience has no standard by which to accuse them. Does this not explain the political environment of today? We wonder why they have no conscience. The answer is they have no firm standards. But, since they are elected into office, they are simply a reflection of the bankrupt society that

knows very little truth and has low standards. So, most of society has a weak conscience and little conviction for right and wrong. This is why Christians are called to live holy and set apart from the world.

This is one of many reasons why all leaders are to be tested. As verse 10 reads, “And let them **also** be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” New believers are not to be put in leadership because they have not proved who they really are over the test of time. **Leaders in the church are to be a reflection of Christ and the Scriptures not reflections of society.** The structure of verse 10 implies the testing is ongoing. Leaders are tested continually by the standard of Christ. Would you circle the little word **also** in verse 10 because this is meant to take us back and makes application of this same truth we observed a few verses earlier for an Elder. Both Elder and Deacon are to be tested and tested throughout their serving as leaders.

So everyone is tested and the testing is an ongoing process. We watch people and we see their spiritual service, their Christian ministry, how they live for Christ. Over a period of time as we evaluate their life of service to Christ we are rendering a verdict on whether they have been approved through that testing period. Whether they qualify to serve in leadership. Those who are deacons are tested and proven people. It is a process. The end of verse 10 introduces us to a familiar word we met back in verse 2; they are to be “**blameless.**” Being “**blameless**” means the qualification is not lower for the Servant as compared to the Overseer. The service is different, the function is different and it is the carrying out what the elders direct. But the qualification is the same, to be “**blameless**”. The concept of blamelessness is so comprehensive that we could go back to verses 2 and 3 and go through that whole list and apply that to the Deacon because it is just an expansion of what blameless means. They are to be without reproach, no blot on their life, without spot, without blemish, nothing for which they could be accused and

disqualified. There is in a sense not only the moral purity of the heart but also the moral purity of perception by others thus rendering them without blame.

## **Heart of Spirit**

Verses 11 to 13 repeats that the standards are the same for deacons as for elders.

“Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup> Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. <sup>13</sup> 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.”

A man who works to fulfill all these qualifications listed here in these 13 verses is guaranteed to grow spiritually. As one grows spiritually they find themselves in good standing with both believers and unbelievers. A leader’s job is to help others grow spiritually, which in turn also grows them spiritually. I know, at least at times, that I grow and gain more in my study of the Scriptures than you do in hearing the message on Sunday mornings. Praise God there is power in His Word for all who hear.

So, to desire to serve as an Elder or Deacon is a noble desire. To serve in leadership comes with qualifications and it comes with a price; just ask wives what price their husbands who lead in the church have paid. A man who leads well deserves honor. On a more personal basis, every man is to lead his family and if he does so well, he is honored for his faithfulness and his willingness to pay the price of being a follower of Christ Jesus. To serve in leadership places on one a number of qualifications that brings honor to God and sets holy standards before fellow believers and the lost world. **There is a price for being a Christian, but when that price is willingly paid, God bestows spiritual blessings.** Let us hold the leaders of Canyon Bible Church to the standards found in the Word of God, for

when we do this neither God nor His church will ever have shame and we will serve Him and His people well.

## **Heart of Mystery**

We close this morning with Paul's closing words, please look in your Bible at 1 Timothy chapter 3 beginning in verse 14. Here is revealed the mystery as Paul writes, "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. <sup>16</sup> Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." (1 Timothy 3:14-16) How blessed we are, my beloved, for the words God gave to Paul and that they were put down in writing. Here we have truth, eternal truth that never changes. Here we have the mystery of God reveal to His children. Here we have the standards given by God and the promise of His blessings. Here in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, God has defined how we are to live in His church. As His children we are to be His "pillar and buttress of the truth" in a world that knows little of truth. In order to be truth bearers we must, let me repeat, we must confess the mysteries found in the New Testament revelation of Christ to each other and to the world. We must confess and live "the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." David and I are committed to strive for this in our lives and the life of our community. It is not a commitment just for leadership, but for all of us. If you, my beloved, are committed to this lifestyle can you say with me to our holy God, Amen and Amen! Let us now shout – Amen!

