

Intro:

In 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Paul follows the qualifications for elders with a list of qualifications for deacons. In many churches today, the role of and difference between elders and deacons is confused and misunderstood. While the lists are very similar, the one major difference is that the elders must be able to teach. So, elders are to lead the church by teaching and shepherding, while the deacons are lead servants who help to care for the physical and logistical needs of the church which in turns allows for the elders to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Questions

1. We read about what is likely the origin of the deacon role in Acts 6:1-6 when the apostles chose several servants (deacons) to help care for widows. These early deacons cared for disenfranchised widows helping to bring unity to a young and growing church. So, at the heart of deacon service is protecting the unity of the church.

–Discuss the importance of church unity and how it relates to the ability of a local congregation to be a witness of the gospel (Reading Psalm 133 may be helpful).

–While food distribution amongst widows may not be our issue, what are some common threats to local church unity that we may face?

–What are practical ways that regular members of a local church can guard and protect the unity of the church? (Read Romans 12:9-21 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14)

2. In our text, Paul once again (like elders) refers much more to character than any particular skill competency. In other words, Paul seems to emphasize godliness more than giftedness when it comes to choosing church leaders.

–Discuss how leaders are often chosen in the secular world. How are Paul's instructions different?

–Why is it so important for a potential deacon (and elder) to be tested first before they are able to serve in such a role?

3. In v13, notice how Paul connects faithful service with gaining a good standing and great confidence in the faith.

–Consider how faithfully serving the church and others helps to produce assurance in the life of a Christian.

–Clearly not all members can serve in the official role of deacon. But, the heart to serve and care for the needs of others should be the heartbeat of every Christian. Take time to discuss practical, informal, and organic ways that every Christian can serve the local church.