

Four Qualities Of An Effective Servant

Introduction. When a person thinks about the practical qualifications of deacons there are several examples that come to mind. He must be willing to sacrifice Sunday afternoons or evenings for long meetings, fix plumbing, count money, duplicate sermon tapes in sleep, etc.

That is typically the way we think. But such a caricature of the role and work of a deacon veils the true dignity and the significance of his position. We put elders and preachers upon pedestals and talk about the importance of shepherding and teaching, but where are the deacons? "Oh, they are outside digging up the sewer line that stopped up" or, "They have all got their heads stuck under a cabinet somewhere trying to figure out why the sound system does not work." For the most part, deacons are viewed as performing menial tasks and taking care of duties nobody else is willing to do.

How untrue this is when you look at the picture of deacons in scripture. Deacons most certainly have a ministry of service. However, God sees their work of service as worthy of the highest honor and greatest respect. The qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 show deacons and their families to be of high spiritual quality and their lives worthy of respect and confidence. But in this lesson we will not focus upon their qualifications as such, at least not those listed in 1 Timothy 3. We are going to discuss four characteristics that make a deacon an effective servant as we have the occasion to appoint two new deacons to the work this morning.

I. ***Wholeheartedness***

- A. An effective deacon has to give his heart to the task without reservation. Hezekiah became king of Judah when he was 25 years old and demonstrated his great leadership among God's people by bringing about a lot of needed reforms. One of the keys to his success is described in 2 Chronicles 31:20-21.
- B. The attitude of servanthood is not the doctrine of our society. It is the very opposite of a world crazed with a thirst for power and control. But the scriptures teach us to put forth a wholehearted effort (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23).
- C. We see nothing less in the example of Jesus (Matthew 20:20-28). God is looking for and will be satisfied with nothing less than wholehearted service from everyone, and that includes deacons (Luke 14:23; Romans 12:1-2).

II. ***Singlemindedness***

- A. Any worthwhile task requires focus and dedication to accomplish. This is especially true in the life of a deacon.
- B. One can see great desire and dedication to the task at hand in the life of Jesus (John 4:34-35; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 9:51).
- C. One can also see this in the life of Paul (Philippians 3:13-14). Notice that Paul said, "I press," not "float," "glide," "slip," or "drift." As Paul came to the end of his life, he reflected on his singleminded service for the Lord (2 Timothy 4:6-8).
- D. A man can destroy his life in one of three ways.
 - 1. Give in to the lazy and slothful nature and do nothing.
 - 2. Give yourself to a goal, work hard, and discover in the end that you gave yourself to the wrong goal.
 - 3. Dabble in everything and never really do anything (2 Timothy 2:4; Joshua 1:7).
- E. But the Bible gives at three reasons for singlemindedness.
 - 1. Everything in this world is temporal and transient (2 Peter 3:10). Only two items will transcend this world and last eternally: the word of God and the souls of men.
 - 2. Life is too short to be wasted (James 4:14).
 - 3. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

III. ***A Mind Set On Excellence***

- A. We serve a God of excellence.
 - 1. His name is excellent (Psalm 8:1).
 - 2. His greatness is excellent (Psalm 150:2).
- B. This was the attitude of Jesus (Mark 7:37). His life is a testimony to the fact that anything worth doing is worth doing right. Everyone, deacons included, owe God the very best we can give.
- C. We are appalled sometimes at the lack of excellence shown in shoddy workmanship we see around us, this is not the spirit of our Lord.
- D. Everything we do should be done in the name of the Lord and everything we do reflects upon that name in one way or another (Colossians 3:17). We need to make certain that what we do reflects well on that name!

IV. ***Initiative***

- A. Initiative is "the action of taking the first step or move; taking responsibility for beginning or originating; the ability to think or act without being urged."
 - 1. Its obvious that initiative is a basic quality of the deacons. Once called to a task, it is theirs to get done (Acts 6:1-3).

2. Someone must take responsibility; take the first step or nothing will ever get done.
 3. Many times we are like Joseph's brothers (Genesis 42:1-2).
- B. One of the reasons that a man is identified as meeting the qualifications of a deacon in the first place is because he is first "tested" or "proved." That is, his initiative in serving is observed by those around him.

Conclusion. The work of a deacon is vital, essential, and important. But what can they expect in return? Thunderous applause? High visibility? The men who serve God's people as deacons do not serve for temporal rewards. They are motivated by something greater (1 Timothy 3:13). A deacon serves because he wants to be like Jesus (Philippians 2:3-5).

If God holds the men who serve as deacons in "good degree," if God says they serve with "great boldness in the faith," then surely we, as a congregation of God's people, can and should hold them equally in high regard. May God bless our men who serve well and stand high!