

Deacons in the Church

1 Timothy 3:8 ESV (Pg. 576) 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.

- I. Over the past 2 years of NRLC's existence, I have shared the elder's insistence to take our church in an ever-increasingly biblical direction. This is necessary because our church, like all other churches, is filled with, and governed by people who are victims of their own sin-natures. Though our intentions are good, we will always be swimming against the current of our own pragmatic thinking, and our tendency to introduce worldly systems and goals into the life of the church.
 - A. Our only weapons in the fight to be a God-pleasing fellowship are the Word of God, the leading of the Spirit, and the wisdom the God has granted to the Body of Christ, as it gathers to worship and share life with each other in this place.
 1. The challenges we face in this regard are not new, in fact they have been a part of church life since the very beginning. For example, when the church began, all the believers were Jewish, but in Acts 10, God called Gentiles to salvation and poured out his Spirit upon them. This created problems!
 2. The leaders didn't know how much the new Gentile believers would have to adhere to Jewish laws and traditions. Would they have to be circumcised? Worship at the Temple? Keep the festivals and purification ordinances?
 - a) In Acts 15, the Apostles gathered seek the Spirit's wisdom, consulting the scriptures for how to proceed about this. Together they wrote a letter to the Gentile believers to let them know what the gospel required of them.
 - b) **Acts 15:28 ESV** For it has seemed good **to the Holy Spirit and to us** to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: **29** that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."
 - c) They had consulted the Word, and through the leading of the Holy Spirit, the leadership being in one accord, made a decision about the Gentiles.
 - B. This is what we have tried to do over the last 2 years. You have seen us go from a CEO/managerial model of eldership to a more pastoral one. You've seen us introduce formalized membership, allowing you to declare your willingness to take ownership of our church, to be pastored and held accountable. We've even held membership meetings to give you the chance to speak wisdom into vital issues facing the church. It's been a great way for our church to mature!
 1. But we're not done. Over a year ago, on December 2nd 2018, I cast a vision for deacon ministry at North Ridge Life Church. In the 20 year history of this congregation, for whatever reason, we have never had deacons. And that is something that the elders and I felt needed to be addressed and corrected.

- a) So we set out to determine what a biblical deacon was by consulting the scriptures, collecting wisdom from people we knew, and from books and articles we read, but mostly we prayed for the Spirit to guide us.
 - b) All of this led to a deeper understanding of what a biblical deacon was. This was important, since many of us grew up in churches where people functioning as elders were called deacons, or vice-versa.
 - 2. So we discovered that a deacon is a servant-hearted person who loves Christ, is full of his Spirit, and who does “whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church”¹. They could be men or women who model servanthood for us.
 - a) Unlike the elders, who are given primarily to prayer and the word², They should be able to oversee different areas of practical administration within the church’s life, and lead others in doing so.
 - b) These areas can be anything, from ministries of hospitality, to the care of the facilities, to various missional outreaches, to financial oversight.
 - C. But understand, this is a role of great honor in the Body of Christ, not to be granted lightly, or carried flippantly. Our text today shows that clearly. Paul says a deacon must be dignified, not bringing dishonor on the church. He or she must not be hypocritical, undisciplined, or greedy. He also says they must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience”. Simply put, Paul is saying they must be stone-cold serious, and personally convinced about the gospel.
 - 1. He goes on to say that they must be tested in all of these requirements. They must demonstrate both calling and competency to fulfill the role of deacon. Character, as opposed to talent or gifting, are the main considerations.
 - 2. Paul even lays out high qualifications for the wives of deacons, that they be dignified as well, but also not gossips and slanderers. They must be serious minded, and faithful in all things. These instructions for wives tell us that no deacon serves alone, and that women are biblically qualified for service.
 - a) Deacons are to be faithful husbands, and good fathers. Those who can’t rule their homes are disqualified from ruling any area of the church.
 - b) It is interesting to note that the qualifications Paul gives for deacons is almost identical to his qualifications for elders a few verses earlier, with the notable exception that deacons aren’t required to teach the body.
 - D. So we knew that anyone we asked to serve in this capacity had a lot of stringent requirements to meet. We began to consider members of our congregation who would be biblically qualified. There were (and still are) many. So we decided to begin by selecting someone to serve as Lead Deacon to give guidance to this burgeoning new ministry at North Ridge Life Church.
- II. After our second Covenant Partner meeting, God laid it on our hearts as elders to approach Justin Kime about serving in this capacity. I personally have known Justin for about 8 years, and Pastor David has known him longer. We approached Justin about this role a few months ago, and after a lot of prayerful consideration, and several additional questions, Justin felt God’s leading to say “yes to the position.
 - A. Justin is currently a Major in the United States Army, serving in an administrative role that has already helped him to bring great insight into the decisions that we have to make on a daily basis around here.

- B. But like the Apostle Paul, our main concern was that Justin have the character that is required in our passage today. Let's take a look at how Justin stacks up:
1. **"Deacons likewise must be dignified"** The Greek word for dignified means august, venerable, reverend; to be venerated for character or honorable³.
 - a) I have found Justin to be a man who is very serious about the gospel and the ministry of the church. As he has served as a youth minister, a small group leader and other support roles, he has done so in a way that has brought honor to Christ's name, and never shame.
 - b) This doesn't mean that Justin is stuffy! Anyone who knows him knows that he has a healthy, almost mischievous sense of humor.
 2. **"not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain"** Justin has been an encourager with his words and actions, he is a disciplined man, and I have seen he and Landi portray a generous heart.
 3. **"They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience"**. Justin is someone who's life has been transformed by the gospel, and can tell you clearly what the grace of Jesus means to him. The truth of Jesus guides and defines every aspect of his private and public life.
- C. **"And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless"**. Justin has served many roles in our church over the years. He has often been brought in when we were in a pinch, and needed some quick, quality help. He and Landi have always risen to the occasion.
1. They have been prayerful, devoted to Christ, and loyal to our church.
 2. They have performed every duty with the highest level of excellence.
- D. **"Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things."** All of these attributes perfectly describe Landi Kime. She shares her husband's dignity and love of Jesus. She is known for building others up, her serious approach to real problems, and her "Proverbs 31" faithfulness.
1. Ginger and I are always grateful for Landi's warmth, strength, encouragement, and wisdom. I know many of you feel the same way.
 2. Landi will certainly be a vital asset to Justin's ministry, and will distinguish herself with a continued fruitful ministry in her own right.
- E. **"Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well."** You can tell a lot about the kind of husband a man is by looking at his wife. If Landi's character is any indication, Justin is a phenomenal husband. He also shows wonderful patience and tenderness as he fathers Simon and Harper as well. If the way he manages his home tells us anything, it is that he will be a great manager and leader for NRLC.
- III. Don't forget that Justin is only the first of what we hope will be many qualified biblical deacons that help the Body at North Ridge Life get to where God has called it. Are you a man or woman of character and skill? Do you love this church, but also see ways that you could help it become more excellent and Christ-exalting? Are you committed to the gospel, and don't want us to have any hindrances in our proclamation of it? God maybe calling you to deacon ministry!
- IV. But that kind of a thing has to start somewhere. **(Invite Paul and David to the platform)** So it is with great joy that I with the other elders welcome Justin Kime as

the first Lead Deacon of North Ridge Life Church. We are going to ask him and Landi to come forward and share some thoughts about the deacon's ministry.

A. **(Justin's Comments)**

B. **Ordination Ceremony:** Justin, having been examined by this church and its elders, and having met the qualifications for deacon ministry laid out in the Holy Scriptures in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3; and having, together with this body, sensed your calling to lead as a model of servanthood in our church as the Holy Spirit empowers and guides, coupled with your own desire to do so; we solemnly place our hands upon you, setting you apart for the ministry of a deacon for the ministry of Jesus Christ at North Ridge Life Church; blessing you with the words of the Paul to Timothy: **"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."** We pray over you that your standing in this Body would increase, along with your confidence in your well-grounded faith in Christ Jesus.

C. Prayers by Paul, David, and Marc

V. **Benediction: 1 Corinthians 12:27 ESV** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. **28** And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ***May God continue to appoint all of these in his church; even among such a people as us!***

¹ <https://www.9marks.org/article/biblical-qualifications-and-responsibilities-deacons/>

² According to Acts 6 where the deacon ministry of the church is inaugurated.

³ **semnos**: see: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G4586&t=KJV>