

What is a Deacon?

The Church Family

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Alright, well, we're going to be looking at the book of 1 Timothy so if you want to take your Bibles and open to 1 Timothy, we're in the middle of a very long series where we're just talking about life in the local church. What is the local church supposed to be like? What's supposed to happen at the local church? How do we do the local church? And we've been talking for so long about the local church and one of the reasons why we've been talking for so long about the local church is because God loves the local church. The local church is very important to God and the local church is very important to us. I love the local church but I know, obviously, I know God loves the local church and we love the local church but there are a lot of people out there that actually don't love the local church very much and not just non-Christians either. We've all met people who would say that they're Christians and maybe even we've met some people who are Christians but who have some serious problems with the local church, just disappointed in the local church, and a lot of times the history that they'll bring up, honestly, is hypocrisy. They'll say the church is filled with hypocrites and I think what they mean is the church is filled with sin, sinners, and that's probably one of the biggest objections that people have to the local church, that it's filled with sinners. And while there are a lot of different ways we could respond to that objection, usually I think we probably get defensive, that's tempting, especially when they're talking about our local church, but certainly one of the ways we should respond to those kinds of objections, instead of getting defensive when people say the local church is filled with sinners, is we should respond by basically just agreeing with them.

The local church is filled with sinners. That is true, though I'm not sure about hypocrites. It's kind of the opposite, at least a real church, a Gospel-believing church, if you think about it, a real local church is made up of people who have admitted they are so sinful they deserve to go to hell. You don't believe the Gospel unless you believe that, that you're so sinful you deserve the wrath of God forever and you haven't truly embraced the

Gospel, the message that we're here to proclaim, unless you stop trying to pretend that you are so good and have confessed instead that you are so bad that your only hope for God to love you is for him to show you kindness that you don't deserve. That's what the word "grace" means, kindness you don't deserve on the basis not of how you have lived but on the basis of how someone else has lived instead. That's what Gospel-believing Christians say, they say, "I need God. I am so bad. I need God to accept me not on the basis of my performance, not by me keeping the 10 Commandments. I'm not good enough for that. I need someone else to live a perfect life in my place and to die and take the punishment that I deserve." And of course, that's Jesus.

But that, those are the kind of people in a biblical local church. Those are the kind of people that make up this church, people who believe they're so bad they needed someone to die for their sins and to give them a righteousness they couldn't earn. And those are the kind of people actually, people that are that bad and see themselves as that bad, those are the kind of people that make up a local church and those are the kind of people for whom the local church exists in the first place. The local church, this church, Living Hope, that's what I mean by local church, the local church is not a place for people who think they're perfect and for people who think they have no needs. You come to me and you say, "You know what, I think I'm fine without Jesus," then I don't have much to say to you except that you're deluded and that you need to pray that God would help you to sense your brokenness because the local church is for people who know they're sinners and not just so that they can get together and sin and not care and pretend like it's no big deal and try to act like they're not sinners, but instead so that they can become a community that Jesus uses to change them into something else which is why we're here, actually, and it's why we're so passionate about becoming a biblical local church. We're here, we're trying to establish a biblical local church in this area and throughout Africa not because we think we're so important and not because we think we're so great and not because we think we're so needed and all of that, but instead because we know how needy we actually are. Not just for a place to go on Sundays but we know that we're needy for a local church that really functions according to Jesus' plan. It's like we're sheep, actually, that's how the Bible describes us, and Jesus is our Shepherd and sheep don't know where to go and they don't usually know what is good for them, but obviously Jesus is the Shepherd and he does know where he's going exactly and he has this plan to take us somewhere beautiful, and a big part of that plan has to do with what's supposed to be happening here in the local church.

A big part of the Shepherd's plan for his sheep, taking them where he wants them to go has to do with what's happening in the local church which is why we've been going back now for weeks and just opening up our Bibles and we've been just asking Jesus to show us how we're supposed to do church. This isn't our church, it doesn't belong to any one of us, it belongs to Jesus and so we want Jesus to direct us and to show us how do we become the kind of church that accomplishes what he wants it to accomplish. So we've been seeing as we've been looking at what our chief Shepherd has to say in terms of his agenda for our life together as a local church, that right up there near the top of that agenda for the local church in terms of how he wants us to function has something to do with appointing godly leaders. It's not always the most exciting subject for us to talk

about, leadership in the local church, but there's a certain way that leadership is supposed to function according to Jesus in the local church and it functioning that way is very important if we as a local church are going to be what he intends us to be. We need to be asking, "What does Jesus say about the men who are supposed to be leaders in a local church?"

And we saw last week, first, that we need something here that the Bible calls pastors or elders, and you remember we talked about not just one man who is the king or the spiritual sangoma, but instead Titus 1:5, elders, shepherds. "This is why I left you in Crete," Paul says, "so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders." To be a biblical church, we need biblical elders who actually do the job they have been given by God which is not to be king of the church but instead to serve the church as God's humble shepherds.

And then, second, we need something the Bible calls deacons. Last week, pastors. If you weren't here, get that message so you can hear the kind of pastors that we need. But this week we're gonna see that we also need something called deacons which we haven't talked about yet but I promised we would. There are two offices, there are two positions that we find Jesus establishing in the local church. Sometimes you'll go to churches and you'll find they have all these different names for leadership in the church. They'll have a board, they'll have all these other kinds of things, but when we look to the Bible, there are actually only two positions, two offices that Jesus has planned for the local church that are supposed to last and those offices are elders and deacons, and in a sense it's a little more difficult to talk about deacons than it is to talk about elders, honestly, because there's just a lot less biblical data on what deacons are supposed to do, but I think the office of deacon is so important we can't neglect it and so I want us to take the opportunity to think a little bit about it by turning our attention to one of the few passages that does address it pretty straightforwardly and it's here in 1 Timothy, this letter Paul's writing to Timothy about how to live life in the church, and specifically it's in chapter 3, verses 8 through 13, where if you look down, Paul says deacons.

1 Timothy 3:8, deacons, that's the first word, deacons. Then he says, deacons likewise, because if you look up at verses 1 through 7, he's just given his instructions for overseers or elders or bishops, and now he's turning his attention to deacons, and I think to understand what he has to say about this role of deacons, we should probably make sure that we all understand exactly what he means by the word "deacon." So this is first as we look at this passage, what is a deacon? What is a deacon? Because the word is pretty funny, actually. It's a different kind of word, deacon. It's not a word you probably use that often. It sounds like a name for someone in Africa probably, but it's a, I don't know that I've met a deacon but there should be a deacon, but it's that lone word from the Greek that means deacon is actually not an English word in and of itself, it comes straight from the Greek and it's a word that we borrowed and now we use it in English which is probably why a lot of us don't know what it means. I think there's a lot of confusion about deacons if you look at churches, and one of the ways that you see that many people are confused about deacons is the fact that deacon means many different things in many different churches.

So in some churches, a deacon, you think back to the churches you've been part of, in some churches a deacon is thought of as like a beginning elder. So there are some churches that are like, "Well, that guy couldn't quite just be an elder yet so let's make him a deacon." In other places, deacons actually are elders. I know of churches, they don't have any elders, they just have one pastor and then they have a board of deacons. That's a lot of times in the American South how they run churches, they have a pastor who's sort of like the king, and then they have a board of deacons. Then there are other churches who pretty much have no idea what deacons should be doing and so while maybe they have deacons and they're not elders, those deacons don't end up doing much of anything except perhaps serving as janitors at the church, which in my mind is kind of sad actually, really sad because as I understand the role of deacon, I see this as something huge. It's different than the work of an elder but it's really huge which maybe you'll begin to see if you have a definition of the word itself, because basically the word "deacon" means "servant." So if you're gonna ask what did deacon mean in Greek, it means servant, or you could even say it means minister. It's funny, we use the word "minister" for pastors but the word "minister" is literally the word "deacon," but it's not the word, it's not minister in the way that we sometimes think of it, I guess, because we think of minister is like a professional title but in the Greek it was very literal. To minister was to minister to someone else's needs, to serve them.

So when Paul picked this word "deacon" to describe this office, he wasn't making up a word, instead he was using a word that even non-Christians used and it's a word that had to do with serving someone else. So you might say, "How can I minister to you?" Or that would really be, "How can I deacon you?" Or, "How can I serve you best?" Which is what a deacon is, really. He's a servant of God and a servant of the church. Apparently the Greeks had a lot of words for servants and they had a lot of slaves and different kinds of servants, and the different words they had for servants had different implications. So like sometimes in the Bible you'll read about a bondservant, Paul will say, "I'm a bondservant of Jesus Christ," and that word "bondservant" really has the implication, "I am someone who is absolutely owned by someone else."

This word "deacon," however, it was another one of those words for servant and yet the emphasis on this, in this word was more on the good of the one being served. In other words, a deacon wasn't just someone who served because he was owned, this was someone who wanted to serve because he loved the person he was serving which, again, is helping us unpack what it means to be a deacon. A deacon was a servant, he was someone who cared for other people's needs but he wasn't just any kind of servant, he was someone who loved to serve. This was his passion.

A good picture, actually, of how they used the word "deacon" in everyday life is of someone who waited on tables. So a deacon was a waiter, though I don't think it's probably best to think of a waiter at ?? because they're usually doing it for the tips, they're usually pretty, at least when I was a waiter, I was not really interested in serving as much as I was interested in what they were going to put on the table after I was serving. Instead, the kind of waiter that Paul's talking about when he uses this word "deacon"

would be someone who waited on tables more like a mother. I mean, you know how it is when you go to your mother's house, she makes dinner, she's all about making sure your needs are met and so she's there in the kitchen cooking while you're talking with your family, and then it's dinnertime and you move to the table and she's so busy, isn't she? She's bringing you food, putting it on your plate. She's just making sure everything's right that she doesn't even have time to eat. She's just going back and forth waiting on you, waiting on the table. "What do you need? What do you need? Oh, you need more of this, you need more of that." Which is pretty sweet, actually, because that's a deacon.

It's what it means to be a deacon, to have that kind of heart and I think if you step back and you just think about the way God designed the local church. Here we have these two offices in the local church, we have two positions in the local church of leadership. There are two God-ordained positions of leadership in the local church, what are they? Pastors and deacons and the image that God uses to describe the work of one of those offices is that of a shepherd and the image the Bible uses to describe the work of the other office is that of a mother who's busy waiting on the tables of people she loves, and I'm just saying that neither of those images are glorious, powerful, look at me, look at my suit, look at my shoes, look at, everybody bow down while I walk into the room kind of images. A shepherd was not someone who was powerful and important and certainly someone like a mother who's waiting on tables is not someone who is trying to manipulate others into really basically exalting them over everyone else.

So if you're interested in leadership in the local church, in a biblical local church, if you look at what God says about these offices, the pictures he gives of what it means to be a leader, it's very clear if you really are interested in being a leader in a local church, it cannot be because you are interested in exalting others above yourself. It cannot be. Then you're not in a biblical local church because in a biblical local church, leaders are servants, they're shepherds and they're waiters. The only reason any young man should have a passion to serve in a local church, it has to do with his passion to serve Jesus Christ and serve his people, to live his life dying for the good of others.

Now, again, for me this is where it starts getting cool because both elders and deacons are servants, so there's not a lot of difference there between elders and deacons. They have that in common. In the world, leadership is about power. If you have a group of people in the world, leadership is going to be about how do I get to the point where I get everyone to do what I want, where in the church it's completely the opposite and reposition of leadership in the church is about service. The difference between pastors and elders really comes down to where God is calling them to focus when it comes to serving the church. Are you hearing me? Both elders and deacons are both servants but with elders their focus is more maybe you could say on the spiritual needs of the church. So they serve God by studying the word. They serve God by teaching and praying for God's people and exercising spiritual oversight over the church, where deacons, if you just look at the word itself, it seems their focus is more on the earthly or physical needs of the people in the church. In a sense, they serve the elders by focusing on helping the church with some of the very practical urgent matters which thus enables the elders to maintain their focus on teaching God's word.

As I look at Scripture, that's how I understand the role of deacon began. If you go all the way back to Acts 6, and this is where you just turn your Bibles a little bit, keeps your fingers awake, keeps you awake, Acts 6, you go back and you can see Luke is telling the story of the early church and I gave you a definition of the word "deacon" but here in the book of Acts, in Acts 6 specifically, we find an example of what it looked like to be a deacon, and as you know, I'm sure, Luke is telling what happened in the early church here in the book of Acts and not everything that happens in Acts we're supposed to imitate but I think most of the time if we find something happening in Acts that Paul repeats later in one of his letters, it's something we're at least supposed to take seriously.

So it's kind of like Luke, he wants to help us understand what Paul means with a picture of how it worked in the church and I think that's what's happening with deacons in Acts 6, because you see Luke says, Acts 6:1, "Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists," Hellenists you say, "Wow, I don't even know what that's talking about," but Hellenists were Jewish people who only spoke Greek; they were Jewish people but they had a very Grecian culture, and here, of course, they're believers and they were part of the church and yet they were starting to complain which often happens, and they were complaining "against the Hebrews," Jewish people who only spoke Hebrew, who were culturally Jewish, at least, and they were complaining against the Hebrews "because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution," which is pretty huge if you think about it. There was a daily distribution of food in the early church for widows. Here the Christian church was just getting started, it was just the beginning.

Now it's only Acts 6 and yet they were already caring about the physical needs of suffering people that were part of the church, and I want to highlight that because we've been talking about the church lately and I've been trying to say over and over again that the church's primary function has to do with truth, and it does, and so we've been saying, "Look, the church exists to protect the truth. The church exists to promote the truth and take the Gospel out." And we really believe that. That is our priority and yet sometimes, as we say all that, it sometimes sounds to people like we're saying the church doesn't have to minister to people's physical needs, saying only spiritual needs matter, physical needs don't matter at all, and that's not true. It's wrong to say the church is supposed to be so focused on meeting people's spiritual needs that it doesn't have time to care for their physical needs. It doesn't make sense. If you love someone, you love them body and soul and it's not true biblically. As we look at Jesus, he felt compassion for people who were suffering physically and as we look at the early church, we see they had a passion for helping those who were hurting tangibly. These widows are one example. Even in the early church, they were already helping widows who were suffering because they didn't have enough food. I even think of Paul later, he meets with Peter, James and John and the beginning of the book of Galatians describes it, Galatians 2, and at the end of that meeting it says, Galatians 2:10, they had been talking about all this doctrinal stuff, Paul says, "The only thing that Peter, James and John asked me to do was to remember the poor," and then Paul says, "That was the very thing I was eager to do," which he proved because Paul, one of the things he did in his ministry was work hard and there was a

famine in Jerusalem to raise money from other churches to help support poor believers there.

So obviously this is just how the love of Christ works. One of the things the love of Christ does in you, and I think this is one of the differences between false religions and true religions, is that when you've really experienced the love of Christ, it causes you to be concerned about people other than yourself. One way I can know, look, a false gospel is being preached somewhere very clearly is when I meet a group of people who only think about themselves, or something's going wrong at least, something's going wrong because when people are really understanding the love of Christ, it causes them to be interested, deeply interested in the good of others. False religion, it's about using others for my own good, but with the Gospel it's different and we see that the Gospel was motivating the early believers to be concerned about the needs of others. In Acts, here in Acts 6, they were daily making sure the widows had enough food to eat.

The issue for us as a church is not whether or not we care about people's physical suffering – listen to me now – we care about people's physical suffering, of course we should care, you know what the issue is? The issue, this is why we talk about this, the issue is we know their physical needs are not the only way they're suffering and we also know that whatever their physical problems are and whatever suffering they're experiencing right now, it is not the most serious kind of suffering they'll face. We care about suffering, all suffering, but as someone has put it, we care especially about eternal suffering. We care that you don't have food and that you don't have a job, but do you know what we care more about? That you're going to hell if you don't know Jesus Christ.

So if you come back to Acts 6:2, I wish Africa would get that, I wish Africa would get that, I wish that we would get that. We come back to Acts 6:2, Luke tells us because we care about physical suffering but we know the reality of eternal suffering, the 12 apostles came up with a plan. They came up with a plan, "And the twelve," verse 2, "summoned the full number of the disciples and said, look, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables." We're literally to deacon. We can't give up the preaching of the word of God to deacon. Now what they're saying there because there's a lot of misunderstanding about that, the apostles are not saying they didn't care about the physical needs of these widows. They're not saying that was unimportant. They're not saying they were too important themselves to wait on tables. Instead they were saying serving the physical needs of these widows could easily distract the apostles from the primary way in which God had called them to serve through the preaching of God's word and through prayer, which is why they made a plan.

Verse 3, "Therefore, brothers," look, you know, part of why I'm telling you all this, this isn't just supposed to be academic. I am so sad that in so many churches there are so many people with Bibles on their laps and yet they're allowing ungodly leaders to lead them and they have no idea what those leaders are supposed to do, and yet they go week after week after week after week to these churches with their Bibles on their laps with no idea what their leaders are supposed to do and their leaders aren't doing it and it's damaging to them. You need leaders who do what God called them to do. You need that.

You are needy. Don't be proud. I'm needy. We need a church that functions the way that God calls it to and say you need to know what are leaders supposed to do, and one of the things that elders are supposed to do and one of the things we need men in the church to do is to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word, which I'm saying is how I think it's supposed to work in the church in terms of elders and deacons. You see, the way Jesus loves us is so big and he doesn't only want to take care of us now physically, he wants to take care of us forever spiritually, which is why he gives us elders and he tells those elders, "Focus. Focus. Don't get distracted. Focus. Study. Preach. Pray. Focus. Study. Preach. Pray. Don't get distracted because the church needs to make it to heaven."

But that doesn't mean that God doesn't care about how we're hurting now. He wants to care for us now which is part of why he gave the church deacons. This is an important balance. This is easy for us to get wrong. One idea that a lot of people have is that all that matters is now, and if you look at a lot of people coming to church, that's why they don't care about truth because they're like, "I live and I die and that's it and all that matters is that I'm comfortable." And there are churches out there that have fallen for that, so their mission, if you look at it, is all about the now which is a tragedy because now is only a small part of your life and so we need the church to be the church because nobody else will be telling us this. We need churches that are like, "No, man, life is short! Any suffering you experience right now can't compare to the suffering you'll experience later apart from Christ!"

Very rarely when I'm sitting in the McDonald's down there in Arcadia, I don't ever, never have I had someone come up to me and say, "You know what? I'm suffering! I'm suffering! I'm scared of suffering!" I've never had them come up and say, "You know what? I'm scared of the suffering I'm gonna experience in hell!" I've had millions, I mean, I've had so many people come up, not millions but so many people come up to me and say, "You know what? I need bread. I need a job." And I'm like, "Man, I know that's hard, I know that's hard," but one of our jobs as a church is to say, "Do you know what? We know that's hard. We feel with you but that kind of suffering doesn't even compare to eternity in hell apart from Christ so let me give you what's most important." And we need pastors and elders who will do that, who will devote themselves to proclaiming the Gospel.

Here at Living Hope, we know there's a heaven and there's a hell and so we think we would be the most heartless people in the world if we didn't do everything to get the Gospel out. That's got to be priority #1 and yet at the same time, it's possible to swing so far in the other direction that you start speaking like now doesn't matter at all to Jesus. Whenever someone wants to help someone who's hurting physically, there are churches out there that are like, "Well, you'd better be careful. You'd better be careful. You don't want to get distracted by people's physical pain." But that can't be right either because obviously their present suffering does matter to Jesus because he loves us and so the question is how can we as a church help people with the way they're suffering now without somehow getting all tangled up in the complexities of it because it is complex, I'm telling you, it's confusing, how can we help them without getting distracted from the

primary reason we exist as a church to promote and protect eternal truth? And part of the answer, I think, that God enabled these leaders of the early church to come up with is this role of deacons. I don't think the answer to not getting distracted is to suddenly stop caring. You know, we're like, "Ah, I don't want to get distracted by the fact that you don't have food to eat so I don't give a rip."

No, that cannot be the answer. Instead the answer is to identify and raise up deacons because this is what deacons do, this is their role at Living Hope, they're not simply elders in training, instead they are set apart to fulfill a different role than elders. Elders help lead the church in terms of word, they help us know Christ's love, they help us enjoy Christ's love, they help us understand what it means to be a church family. Deacons also help lead but not so much in terms of word but in terms of service. Now that we know Christ's love, deacons help us show Christ's love to one another and to the world. They help us practically live out our lives like a family. So as we appoint deacons here at Living Hope, what we're doing is we're appointing servants who will do whatever is necessary to help us maintain our mission of proclaiming God's word while still caring and helping people who are hurting and having a lot of different needs.

I think that is so important. I don't want us ever to minimize that. We never should be like, "Well, oh, those are just deacons," or something, because I think without good deacons we're gonna struggle to be the kind of church family that God wants us to be. We need to understand that and this is why maybe you can start getting on your knees and praying for godly deacons, praying for godly deacons, because elders, the elders are just men and they're limited and it takes a lot of work for them to do their job well, to study the Scripture and prepare messages and to shepherd people spiritually, to exercise oversight over the church. I don't always feel like we're even up to that right now and yet there's more going on in our church's life, there are practical issues, there are financial issues, there's all this stuff that's going on in our church and as an elder you think, "If I try to help every single one of the members of the church with these ways in which they're suffering, there's no way I'm gonna be able to study the way that I need to study or that we need to study."

And that's true. That's true. I think that's probably why a lot, maybe not the only reason but that is why a lot of pastors are just getting up and kind of saying not totally nonsense but some guys are getting up and they're not prepared and they're not feeding God's people. Why are they not prepared? Because they're distracted and I can understand why they'd be distracted. There's a lot of things, there's a lot of real ways in which people are suffering and so you look at that as an elder or a pastor and you think, "I know these people need to be cared for because we're family, and yet how do we do this?" And again how we do this, we need men who will lead us in terms of service and those men are deacons. That's their job. They don't do all the work, obviously. They help the elders stay focused on praying and studying while helping the people in the church live out the love of Christ in their everyday lives. So the deacons help us make the Gospel we're proclaiming on Sundays look beautiful through loving sacrificial service to those in need. That's what it means to be a deacon. When you hear the word "deacon in training" or when we appoint someone to be a deacon, that's what a deacon's supposed to do.

Now back to 1 Timothy 3. Who should be deacons? That was the role of deacon but what are the qualifications for a deacon, and this is gonna be 1 Timothy 3:8-12 and just look down at it. Paul says,

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.

Which if you look at that, is pretty intense but I think it makes sense because if you've ever tried to help someone who's in trouble, you know it can be complicated. It's hard and so we need men who are qualified to take care of the church when it comes to leadership in this particular area and we see that the qualifications for deacons, really, are not all that different than the qualifications for an elder. If you look at verses 2 through 7 and then you look at verses 8 through 12, Paul says likewise there's a similarity between the character of the elder and the character of a deacon. The only major difference between the elder and the deacon's qualifications is that the elder must be able to teach, where certainly deacons might be able to teach, Stephen and Philip both were able to teach, but they don't have to because it's not a teaching office, the work of a deacon.

It's a leading office and that's why he has to be qualified to hold it and the first quality that Paul gives us in terms of what it means to be a true deacon is dignified, "Deacons likewise must be dignified." Now this is important. Even as we look at these qualities, you know that not everyone can be a leader in the church, right? Sometimes it doesn't seem like we know that. Not everyone is qualified in terms of their character to be a leader in the church. You can be disqualified by your character from being a leader in the church. You can come to church, be a Christian, we love you, you're growing, and we're not saying you're not a Christian but your character is not at the point where you can be a leader in the local church. You can be disqualified, please understand that. You cannot have the qualities and that's why Paul lists them.

Deacons need to be dignified, which means, what? A person of respect, worthy of respect. Not someone who's silly. Not someone who's immature. Someone who's honorable. Someone who's spiritual serious. It's nice to be funny, obviously, and it's nice to be able to tell jokes and all that, but if you're helping hurting people you cannot be someone who's always sarcastic or light. You need to be a person who's deep. You need to be a person who takes life seriously. You need to be a person who's dignified.

Then if you keep reading, you see that Paul says there are certain things that must not be true of you. You need to be dignified but there are at least three things that can't be true of you. First of all, if you're gonna be a deacon, you can't be double-tongued and this is an important one. The picture is pretty good. He imagines someone who has two tongues.

That's what it means to be double-tongued, so this is a person who says one thing to you and says one thing to someone else. This is a person you cannot count on his word, which honestly wipes out like 90% of the people that we meet. This is the kind of person who hides what he's really thinking with his tongue. So he's got something that's really going on in his mind but he's developed a lifestyle of flattery and of lying and of insincerity. So even though he's thinking one thing, you can never know what he's thinking because he's double-tongued.

We even have to watch out for that culturally, don't we, because I've had people say, "You know what? You can never know an African." And I don't believe it because I believe the Holy Spirit can change all of us, you know? But I've had people say that so even culturally we have to watch out that we haven't developed a pattern of hiding and being insincere, using our tongues to do that, because you can't be a deacon. That's not, this is not just for a deacon, actually this is really for all of us, this is what a godly man looks like. He's the kind of person that his word you can count on which, of course, makes sense when you're working with people who are hurting and you need to know this. When you're working with people who are hurting, if they're really hurting and you're going in there to help them and you just think you're you, you know? But they're looking to you to rescue them. You know that, right, when somebody's really in a crisis, and so you feel bad, so you just say things like, "Oh, I want to do this, I want to do that for you," and they attack a lot of weight to that but you don't really mean it, you just feel bad so you say those kinds of things. That's what it means to be double-tongued. The deacon is a man who's serious. He goes in to help someone who's hurting and he knows, "I can't just go saying things because I feel badly, I have to say things that are true."

Well, Paul says not only can they not be double-tongued, they cannot be addicted to much wine, which should probably be obvious but maybe it's not. We need leaders who are self-controlled, who have control over their mouths in terms of what they say, and have control over their mouths in terms of what they drink. In other words, they're not addicted to pleasure. Maybe this is a temptation when you're working with hurting people, you're involved and seen all these needs, there can be a lot of pressure and so maybe there will be some people who are tempted to look for a way out by getting drunk, and that's not acceptable when it comes to leadership in the church. If you have a man who's a drunk, he can't even be a deacon, much less a pastor, and he can't serve in that leadership position in the church, a man who's a drunk. Do you hear that? If someone is a drunk, that's a disqualifying sin and it's not godly. These men, deacons and elders, they're just examples to us of what godliness looks like.

A leader can't be greedy either. That's third, a deacon can't be greedy. They must not be greedy for dishonest gain which is kind of funny how that keeps coming up when it comes to leadership in the local church, isn't it? It's almost like Paul knew that in the future there would be a lot of men who rise up who want to use people to get rich and think religion's a good way to do that. It's almost like Paul knew that. He knew it. When you listen to what Paul says, he says you cannot be a leader in the church if you're greedy. You're not qualified. You haven't got the first rung on the spiritual leadership ladder if you're greedy for money and for dishonest gain.

The Bible is constantly warning us about putting men in leadership above us who love money and you can see how this is important when it comes to deacons because they're gonna be involved in the practical matters of the church, and I'll tell you what is so sad is that unfortunately a lot of times people have used the practical problems of others as a means of making money for themselves, and we all know of people who take pictures of orphans in order to raise funds. Up in Malawi, you know, it seemed like there were NGOs everywhere and I'm sure there are a lot of good NGOs but I think we've all known people who start NGOs primarily for the money and, of course, it's extremely important that does not happen in the church which is why it's vital we appoint leaders who are basically content with what God's given them because that's the opposite of being greedy.

Then as we keep working our way through this passage, we see in verse 9 there's also a doctrinal test. Paul says the deacon "must hold the mystery of the faith," and mystery is a word Paul uses to describe the Gospel, the revelation we've received in the Gospel. So he's saying this is a person who must have doctrinal convictions. He's got to hold onto the Gospel which I want you to hear because the deacon is someone who serves practically but sometimes we might think, "Well, if he serves practically, it doesn't matter that much if he doesn't know the word of God as long as he's nice." You just put nice men in there and we don't have to pay attention to what they believe, but that would be devastating to our church long term. In order to lead the church even in practical matters, we need men who know and love the truth as it's revealed in God's word.

And I guess I should emphasize love the truth because if you look down at verse 9, you see it's not just that these men can say the right things about the Gospel, there's also a spiritual test. Paul says, "They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience," which means, what? It means deep down when nobody else is around, these men are about Jesus Christ. And I think the church has gotten itself into a lot of trouble sometimes maybe with good motivations, but sometimes you look out there and there's a lot of need and it's tempting to send anyone who is willing to help. I think this happened, America sent missionaries out that really weren't qualified to be missionaries but they're like, "Oh, man, you wanna go help? Well, we're not gonna look at your life very carefully because you want to go help. Let's just send you out." And so sometimes needy places have gotten the least qualified men when it should be the opposite, especially with the work that deacons have to do. It's not glamorous. It's messy. It's complicated.

So there aren't always a lot of people who are interested in doing it and so sometimes even if someone's a little bit interested, we put them in leadership and what happens when they get involved in messy complicated situations is that they do more damage than good. That's why Paul's like, "No, make sure these men really know the Gospel and make sure they believe it." And further, just so you see this is a big deal, is leadership a big deal to Paul? I think it's a big deal and this is a lot of tests, a lot of qualifications. There's a practical test he says in verse 10, "let them also be tested," or evaluated, "first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless." Which is like, wow, there's supposed to be this time where we scrutinize these men as a church and make sure they really know what they're doing, and if they pass the test, it's only then that we appoint

them as deacons, which is why we have the deacon in training process. And I guess I just hope you're seeing that this is a big deal, deacons.

It matters who leads us and Paul's not even done yet. You see next he looks at wives, verse 11. This is actually just so you know, you can look down in your Bible again, this is where there's a little bit of controversy so we're gonna look at verse 11 and I'm gonna tell you what I think this verse means but there's a little bit of controversy on this verse. Verse 11 it says, "Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things." And you say, "Why is there controversy?" Well, there's controversy because in the Greek the word "wives" is also the word "woman." So you don't really have a Greek word "wife," you have a Greek word "woman" that they use sometimes in certain context to mean wife and they use sometimes in other context to mean just woman. So you have to figure out from the context, the translators are trying to help us here and they say "their wives," but you actually when you look at the word, you have to figure out from what's around it, what kind of woman is Paul talking about?

So we know he can't be talking about all women obviously, right? That wouldn't make sense. It would be too random. Is he talking about deacons and then he's like, "Okay, all women need to be like this." No, I don't think that makes sense. Some people think he's talking about deaconesses, women deacons. So it's like he's been talking about men deacons and now they'll say he's talking about women deacons, and then he comes back in verse 12 once again to men deacons, which honestly could be, it could be. It seems a little weird to me but I used to think that this verse was referring to deaconesses, but I don't think now that it actually flows very well. I think there might be a role for deaconesses in the church, I personally would not have a problem being in a church that had the office of deaconess, but I'm not sure I'm comfortable enough to fight for it at Living Hope on the basis of 1 Timothy 3, because I think if Paul were talking about deaconesses, it would make more sense for verse 12 to go before verse 11. I mean, why would he stop, pause, talk about deaconesses and then come back to male deacons in verse 12?

So I think it's actually wives here, I really do. I guess one of the arguments against it being deacon's wives is that Paul doesn't speak about the wives of elders and so that's a real argument for me, but if you think about it, maybe because of the kinds of issues that deacons were dealing with, Paul anticipated that the deacon's wife would be more involved even without a title, and as a result there would be a great need for those women to be especially godly as well. I mean, we'll send a lady out there to check on that. I mean, it just makes sense. Deacons are involved in urgent practical matters, stuff like helping widows, stuff like helping orphans, it makes sense that their wives would be right there with them while they're doing that, and I expect that women will be helping as well.

So I think Paul's concerned that the deacon's wives have a certain godly character and he describes it. Look at verse 11. This is important, guys, because a man can be disqualified because of his wife. Do you hear me? We are going to appoint deacons but a man can be disqualified from the role of deacon because of his wife because Paul has actually qualifications for deacon's wives. He says here in verse 11 that the wives need to be

dignified, which we talked about, serious, honorable. Then he says they can't be slanderers, which is, what? This is huge. Please, please hear me. The issue matters and it matters to you. It matters to you. Leaders, deacon's wives, men we appoint, their wives cannot be gossips. They cannot be slanderers. That is a disqualifying sin. If you're a man who wants to be a deacon and your wife is a gossip, you cannot be a deacon. Do you hear me? You cannot be a deacon in this church. They go out, a person goes out and he works with someone whose husband is in prison because he's done something terrible and the wife is a member of the church and she's scared and she's not knowing what to do, and so she tells the deacons, "Oh, my husband's in prison," and the deacon goes home and tells his wife and his wife goes around and starts talking with all the other ladies in the church, "You won't believe it. This woman's husband is in prison and now she wants to divorce him." And it breaks that woman. It breaks that woman and she never wants to come back to the church or hear the Gospel again.

And it's crazy, guys, because we're so sinful that when someone's hurting and their sin is hurting them, you know what we do instead of feeling mercy for them? This is crazy. Do you want to know that you need Jesus? Someone is hurting, they're being broken by their sin and instead of feeling mercy for them, you know what we so often do? You use their pain as an opportunity to step all over them and go around and tell other people about how bad they are. That's how bad we are, man, we need the Savior. And we often feel contempt for people and we start telling other people bad things about them, and I'm saying that 100% cannot be true of a deacon's wife. It can't be true of an elder's wife either. It cannot be true of an elder's wife and it cannot be true of a deacon's wife.

She's got to be a trap. You know that phrase? It's gotta be like an iron trap in there. She sees stuff, she hears stuff, you cannot get it out of the elder's wife, you cannot get it out of the deacon's wife. She's relentlessly positive about other people. When she talks about them if they're not around, all you can get out is good stuff about other people. You know how some of you are trying to get the gossip, well with the deacon's wife, you're trying to get the gossip, it's a trap. You don't have the, it's like a bank vault, you don't have the lock, you can't unlock it. You can't get the bad stuff out because she will not slander others.

And wives, you need to be hearing me now because you might be married to this great guy who could really help us as a church, and yet because you will not control the way you speak, you end up disqualifying your husband from serving as a deacon. This is a big deal. And husbands, if you want to be a leader, you better be discipling your wife and you'd better take slander seriously and you'd better not just let her go do the things culturally that everybody does. You'd better teach this woman to be a godly woman. This is a big deal.

Paul gives a couple other qualifications for the wife of a deacon as well. He says she's got to be sober-minded, serious again, she's gotta be faithful in all things, in other words, the deacon's wife has to be someone you can always count on. Faithful in all things is a pretty, it's pretty big, isn't it? Trustworthy in every single matter.

Then verse 12, Paul moves on from the wives of deacons to look at the way they manage their families which is important. Verse 12 is all about managing the family and with leadership in the church, it's something Paul's always coming back to, the way they lead their families. The world doesn't care. If you're gonna be President, the world doesn't care what's happening at your home, but Paul always makes that connection when it comes to the church.

Verse 12 he says, "Let deacons each be the husband of one wife." Now again, husband is man, wife is woman, and here I think Paul is saying the deacon needs to be a one-woman man. So I don't think he's saying our deacons actually have to be married, though it will certainly help them when it comes to their role. I think he's saying that actually deacons need to be the kind of men that are not flirts and they're not players.

He says next if they have children, he doesn't say that but I'm adding that because to help you understand the point, they "manage their children and their own households well." It's funny, this is important because you'll meet some people who are always concerned about the needs of others and they get wrapped up in helping everybody else and yet they totally ignore the people that God's placed in their home. And with deacons who are going to be doers, they see needs, they want to find a solution, it's important their priorities are straight and they're faithful to the responsibilities God's give them to lead their families before they step up in order to start leading the church. You know, there's a time, this may be important, it's not every time, where I'm from my culture is bad this way, in my culture it's almost like if I'm ever asked to do something for somebody outside my family, I've gotta be so concerned about my own family that I never do something hardly for somebody outside my family because I could always use my family as an excuse, like, "Oh, I've gotta spend more time with my family."

So that's my culture and there are times where you need to go out and help people out there and ask your family to sacrifice so that you can help people out there, but I would say the opposite is true as well. There are times where we're always going to help people out there and we actually need to say, "No. I'm sorry. I would love to help you but God has given me a primary responsibility to my own family and I haven't been able to do that responsibility very well because I've been distracted lately. So let me get that in order and then I'll be able to help you better." And Paul clearly has those kinds of priorities in mind because he says before you can serve others as a deacon, you have to serve your family well by leading them faithfully.

I need to say, I'm thankful for the men God's given us at this point to help us in this ministry of deacons. We don't have official deacons yet at Living Hope but we have men who are being tested, Randy and Bahati, and I think honestly given our situation, we need more deacons. We need more. We need some of you men to get serious and to step up and I know you're busy and I know there's all kinds of reasons you might want to hold back and I'm not gonna deny that if we're serious about being deacons it's gonna be probably one of the greatest challenges of your life, and I can see you being hesitant but, look, there's a reward to being a deacon and it's worth it. Paul doesn't just tell us what deacons do, the role of deacons, and he doesn't just tell us what deacons are supposed to

do, the qualifications of deacon, in verse 13 finally he answers the question why would anyone want to be a deacon, and this is the reward for deacons. This is third and this is huge. Look at it. If God hadn't called me to be an elder, I would want to be a deacon. There's no question because look at what Paul says, he says,

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.

You get something from being a deacon. You gain. That's what the word "gain" means, "you receive." And a good standing, that came from the word for "step." It's like a word for a platform like this right here. It's a word that you would use for elevating someone above others and what Paul is saying is that when someone serves well as a deacon, it's like God puts them up on a pedestal. You know what a pedestal. It's like God puts them up on a platform which sounds kind of funny to say, doesn't it? It sounds almost wrong but it's not wrong if you're not the one putting yourself up there. God's the one who put the deacon up there. It's not like Paul is saying you should want to be a deacon to exalt yourself above others, instead he's saying this is the way the Christian life works. If you lay your life on the line for the good of others, it ends up being good for you. Humble yourself, the Bible says, God will exalt you. That's what happened with Jesus. He didn't come to be deacon, he came to deacon and what happened? He was glorified and that's not just the way it worked with Jesus, that's the way God works with us. As we focus on lowering ourselves and we just get wrapped up in going as low as we can in serving others, what actually happens is the opposite, God lifts us up.

Like the deacon here, it says, he gains a good reputation. That's what good standing means. He gains a good reputation in whose eyes? I think he gains a good reputation in God's eyes and in people's eyes, and not just a good reputation either, what comes next? Paul says he also gains a great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus, which is a pretty sweet reward as well. Confidence is, what? It's assurance. It's boldness. I think what he's saying is as you step out to serve Jesus, you give your life to serve Jesus, you find yourself growing in confidence in the faith which I found, for sure. The times when I'm doubting the most are times when I'm turned in on myself and not really reaching out in obedience. It's like confidence is a muscle and it grows in strength as you exercise obedience, which is what happens for deacons. They're faithful and they make these sacrifices and at the end of the day, all those sacrifices are worth it because not only do they help the church function the way it should, God stuffs his commands with kindness and as the deacon steps out and serves, which is difficult, he's gonna find he becomes a person worthy of respect. And that's just the start, you wait until he gets to heaven and the angels are wowed by the deacon's service. And each little act of obedience is gonna grow his confidence in Jesus, and as a result, he's gonna become more and more effective and make a greater and greater impact, which is what we want as individuals and as a church.

We want to make an impact as a local church. We believe Jesus wants us to make an impact, not just to get here on Sundays. He wants us to make an impact on our community. He wants to use this church in big ways to glorify himself, to help people, and the reason we have hope that can happen is not because we're so smart but because

he's good and he's laid out the plan for us as a local church in his word. We know how to be a local church. We know how to be an impactful local church because Jesus has told us and one of the keys, not the only keys, but one of the keys to us being a church that makes a difference has to do with having the right kind of leadership here at Living Hope. We need leaders who are servants, some we'll call pastors because they focus on preaching the word, and some we'll call deacons because they help the pastors maintain their focus on the eternal through their humble service and care for the church and its very practical and urgent needs. Pastors who help us know the love of Christ and we need deacons who help us show the love of Christ.

Let's pray that God would raise up just those kind of men in this church and pray for their wives as well, and specifically we pray for Randy and Bahati as they're our deacons in training, and pray that God would raise up more men to step up and help them and help us be a family. Then we'll take some questions in a moment.

Heavenly Father, thank you. Lord, this might have felt a little more academic to some but it does matter. It obviously matters because we look around at all these churches and yet they're not functioning, they're not making an impact, and why? Sometimes it's because they're not listening to what you say about leadership. And so, Lord, help us as a church not just to say, "Ah, that's somebody else's responsibility," but for us to say, "No, we need to know what God's word says about the kind of men that should lead us." And God, please qualify our men. Help them to be the kind of men that they can't be on their own, the kind of men that Paul describes that helps us as a church, who really care for the hurting. We pray this, Jesus, in your name. Amen.

Alright, well, let's see does anybody have any questions or comments? I guess I have just one quick comment while Rudy's passing out the microphone. If you have any questions or anything, I would just ask you as a church make this easier for the elders and deacons and I think you have a biblical responsibility to do that. And one of the ways you can make this easier is by helping us know you better. So if you have spiritual problems, come. Don't hide. Don't be that sheep that is trying to play hide-n-seek with the shepherd. If you're hurting, come and ask for help. Let us know you. I know that's why when I come over to your house, you'll notice I probably ask a lot of questions because I think I'm the FBI or something, it's because I want to know the real you and so you don't have to be afraid of that. Then also with deacons, if you're struggling, you need to talk to the deacons. They may not be able to have any answers right then but these should be wise men who can point you back to what God's word has to say about practical issues.

Bahati?

"Thanks, pastor. I've heard you say that deacons are there to look after our physical needs in the local church. So I'm thinking of a certain church, for instance, in a wealthy neighborhood where everyone can look after his own needs successfully so they don't need any help from outside. Does that mean this church doesn't need deacons?"

Okay, I'll tell you a couple of things, three things maybe, I'll try. The first thing is that there's no community like that. So I've lived in wealthy areas and I've never lived in a wealthy area where there weren't needy people. What I have lived in is areas where people's eyes were closed to the needs of others because of their wealth. So I've never been in a wealthy community where people did not have really urgent needs, so maybe I can't imagine an area like that. So even in Germany now, you know, there's all these refugees pouring in, even, yeah, so I've never lived in an area like that.

Second of all, I would say it may be there are times where there are less deacons needed.

Then, third, I would say the reality is that there's also all kinds of practical needs that could keep the pastor and pastors from focusing on the word, like sometimes the finances of the church, sometimes just the everyday matters of how things are set up at the church, and so there are all kinds of other practical matters for which elders might appoint deacons to serve the church by helping enable the elders to focus more on the teaching and preaching of God's word. So that would be my answer to that.

It is possible for there to be a church were at that point they haven't appointed deacons, but they, I'm sure as the church grows, we need to....

"Thank you so much, pastor. I've been following from last week that is given the topic about pastors and this week deacons, I remember at the Communion I did ask you what is the difference between the deacons, pastors, basically where does the bishop come in because some of us who are coming from family backgrounds where we used to go to church, be it Roman Catholic, be it United Methodist, Anglican, etc. etc., and I'm sure some of us in this church would love to understand the difference. Thank you."

Sure. Bishop is the word "overseer" in the Bible, so the word "overseer" is the word "bishop," episkopos. It's the word "bishop" in the Bible and in the Bible a bishop is an elder, is a pastor. So elders are bishops, our pastors are bishops, every pastor is a bishop, he's an overseer of the church. It's the same thing. We don't use that term here because people have taken it and confused it and they have made it into a role that you don't find in the Bible. So in the Bible there were apostles, uniquely, that was a temporary office, but there weren't these men that were above local churches that called themselves bishops.

So that, we don't use that term. We could. We could say, "I'm a bishop and Alan is a bishop," in the same church, two bishops in this church, but we don't use that because people don't understand what it means. A bishop is an elder, is a pastor. If someone's going around saying, "I'm Bishop This or That," yeah, I would, and he means, "I'm so far above all these other pastors," I would really, I would not be excited about that.

So the word is "episkopos" in the Greek. It just means overseer. So every time in your Bible you see "overseer," that's some word sometimes people translate it "bishop." It's the same word and that word "overseer," if you look at different passages, it's used

interchangeably with "elder." In the same passage in Acts 20, an overseer, elder, pastor, they're all the same thing and a deacon is something different but they're both servants.

Any other questions or comments?

"I was just thinking it might be a good time to remind the congregation of how they can contribute towards the food supplies for the deacons."

Okay, go for it.

"Okay. Actually, Andre? Okay, alright. Okay, so basically non-perishable foods, things like canned food or things like mealy-meal, that sort of thing, stuff that's not gonna go bad in a couple of days. When you're doing grocery shopping, if you want to buy one or two extra things and then donate those to our church's deacon fund, then the deacons can take those supplies and use those supplies towards helping people in the church who are in financial need. And you can just bring that stuff with you on a Sunday or you can drop it off at your Gospel community groups during the week."

Alright, any other final questions or comments? Yeah, here we go, Mustafa.

"I just want to find out would these pastors and deacons have, focus only on the church or should they have other way to do [unintelligible]. Should they have [unintelligible]."

Yeah, well, I'm sure in, you know, it would be a great world where you could have those kind of resources where a person could choose to be a deacon and be fully paid by that, supported by the church to do that, but that's not the real world in which we live. So it's possible for a man to have an outside job and be a good deacon and it's possible for a man to have an outside job and actually serve as a pastor, but he's gonna suffer. He's gonna have to work, for sure. So, I mean, Paul had an outside job, tent-maker, and there were times actually where Paul chose to have that outside job, he gave up his right for specific purposes. So, yes, you can, our deacons can be, and it's sometimes helpful for them to have outside jobs in terms of they have contacts and resources to be able to help the church.

But pray for your deacons and pray for your elders because it's a lot of work, and also maybe be a little sympathetic towards them. You know, sometimes when you're hurting, you're like, "Why doesn't this guy come over right now?" And sometimes it's because he has another job and he's got, even at a church there might be six or seven families that are hurting. You know, sometimes here in Africa when somebody's cousin dies, as a pastor you want to go, but sometimes you're expected to go for like three or four times in one week, and then you might have three or four other families whose uncles or cousins died and you're supposed to be there that many times to each one. It's pretty hard to get all the other stuff done that God called you to do and do all of that, and so the reality is, and you say a guy's working a full-time job on top of that. So the reality is we live in this broken world so we need to pray for our men who are serving in this way. We need more than just one, that's why you need the team of guys.

Yeah, Carlos?

"[unintelligible] the elders should be married or the case that they are married, they [unintelligible] of wife. [unintelligible]."

Yes, I would say the same is true for elders. It helps in many ways for an elder to be married but I don't think it's a requirement. The phrase "husband of one wife" is also just as legitimately translated "one-woman man," and I think if we look at the bigger picture of Scripture, to require an elder to be married is Jesus would not be able to be an elder, Paul probably wouldn't have been an elder, it's possible some other of these godly men wouldn't have been able to be elders. So I think what Paul's saying when he says husband of one wife, he's talking about the heart of a man. He's a one-woman man. This is the kind of guy if he got married, you know he'd be faithful to his wife. As you look at him as a single man, he's steady. He's not playing with all these girls, breaking hearts here and there. He's just an honorable man in his relationship with women and the kind of man you'd expect, he manages his affairs well.

So I don't think an elder has to be married or a deacon has to be married, but I do think that there's a lot of ways it could help him, but on the other hand, single, I should say single, if you're single in the church, you have a unique opportunity in your life. It's maybe not always great to have married people tell you that but it's true. You know, you really have the unique opportunity to lay your life on the line for the good of others, some of those concerns and burdens are maybe not, they're different in your life and so you have some opportunities to serve. So I think a deacon can be single, an elder can be single. I don't think those requirements mean that they can't. Even Paul in 1 Corinthians says there are times where it's better to be single and it seems like if he says there are times where it's better to be single, then it would be hard to say being married has to be a qualification for being an elder or a deacon. But I understand, I think I can understand why some people think that. That's not like they're just going kind of being silly, but I don't think that's what Paul means.

Nick?

"[unintelligible]. She wants to know like the role the church plays when it comes to testing of deacons. Is it the role that the church also is involved in or is it only for the elders?"

Yes, I think it's a role that both elders and church need to play a part in, and so that's why we've said these are our deacons in development, that's why I'm teaching all of these things because I want you as a church to know what to test the men in regards to. And so you need to be looking at their life. You need to care who leads you. Like when I get on a plane, I care whether that pilot knows how to fly. When I get on, I'm glad there are tests in place to make sure he's qualified. When I go to the doctor, I don't want some joker, I want a guy who passed the test and was qualified. I don't understand why when people come to church, they don't care who leads them there because your soul is much more

important than your bodies, so you guys have to care and you have to care are these guys qualified, and God gave you the qualifications there.

So, yes, the church does play a role with both our elders in development and our deacons. We've asked you as a church to be looking at their lives. If you have concerns, you need to go to them. If you're scared to go to them, you need to come to us and we'll help you talk about those kinds of issues. Then at the end, I think there's gonna be a time where we even, yeah, ask the church, we'll give you some time to come to us and say, "Yeah, we affirm these men or we don't affirm these men." That's part of the church's role, for sure.

Oh, one last one.

"Relating to the deaconesses, no? So how, what do we can say about the leadership of the woman in the church? What role should they play? I mean, what do we can find in the Bible? Do we assume that there could be deaconesses or what kind of role do they should play?"

Yeah, that's a good question, can there be deaconesses? I think the passage in Timothy is better understood as deacon's wives but I understand why people think it's deaconesses. So it's a tough passage, is what I'm saying. In Timothy, he talks about their wives, that also could be women deacons. It's a very difficult passage. There's one other passage, one other passage where Paul seems to describe a woman as a deaconess, it's in Romans. The problem is the word "deacon" is not always an official title, it also is just the word "serve." So it's hard to know was she just a servant of the church or was she officially recognized as having a leadership position, and so I honestly would be comfortable going to a church where they had deaconesses. I would be comfortable. I would not fight and say, "Oh." It depends what the deaconesses were doing but if they were doing the role that they're supposed to do, servants, I would not say, "Oh, I'm gonna leave this church because they have deaconesses."

I think the passage is that hard, but at our church, at our church I don't feel comfortable fighting. I don't think there's enough evidence that I'm gonna fight to say, "Hey, we need to have deaconesses," because really the truth is you don't need a title to serve and if you need a title to serve, then you shouldn't be a leader in the church anyway. So I think women have a huge role to play and perhaps they don't have an officially recognized leadership title that's given to them from the New Testament but women have a, can make a huge impact on the life of our church through sacrificial service that's described in Timothy.

Alright, yeah, we've got one more and then we're almost done.

"Yeah, along the same lines of the questions about deaconesses, what about like I know [unintelligible] home, we have a role called deaconess but it's not the same thing as a deacon [unintelligible]. What do you think about them having a role like that, that's not necessarily a deacon's role? Is that kind of necessarily just like the name would be [unintelligible], they're not like in leadership, they're not doing anything that's wrong."

What I'm saying is that I wouldn't necessarily leave a church because they have that happening. I don't think that's necessarily the role of, I don't think that's the right word for it, but is it wrong to have women take leadership in organizing parties at the church? No. Is it wrong to have women who help us care for the needs of a lot of the practical needs in the church? No. I don't think that's wrong. I probably wouldn't call it a deacon, well, we won't call it a deaconess here at Living Hope, we'll just call it, "Thank you very much and your reward is gonna be in heaven."

Alright, I think Donovan wanted to clarify one thing, you were saying.

"Just maybe elaborate on the fact that the passage is about elders. There isn't the grayness about whether or not [unintelligible]."

Oh yeah, There's no such thing as an elderess. That's definite. So a female elder is a contradiction in words. That'd be like saying in America it might go but we know in Africa it doesn't go. That's like a man saying he's a woman. A female elder, they're like, it's like an oxymoron and there is no women elderess that's described for us in Scripture. Deaconess, a little more gray. So it's a little more gray. Elderess, not gray, that's very clear.

Alright, thank you, guys. Really appreciate you asking questions and it makes preaching a lot more fun to preach to people who are thinking and really that helps me be a better preacher. You know, one way to help people be better preachers is think while they're preaching. If you think while they're preaching, then they can't just say nonsense to you because you're like, "Hey, that doesn't make sense." So then what do they have to do? They have to work harder. So you know why in a lot of places you have men who can spout nonsense all the time? It's because nobody is listening. And so you want to make a pastor better, a preacher better, you don't, you have a job to do sitting there in the chair and that's pay attention and think and then challenge a little bit lovingly if it's not according to God's word.

I think those of you who are really interested in Living Hope long term and all those things, Andre has something he wants to share.