

1 Timothy 3:1-16 - Leaders: Organised for God's Mission

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

I'm scared.

We had a lady called Natalia and her son, Leonid, come and stay as part of the UK kind of – it wasn't really a refugee thing, but it was like the UK opened its borders to Ukrainians to come and shelter here, essentially.

And they found our church by accident. And they were – I think they were looking for a different church, and they stumbled on our church. And they then made our church their home.

And when Natalia was here the first time, she put us in contact with the pastor of the church there in Kiev. And the pastor there was a self-employed man, and he was funding the church through his own business.

[1 : 29] And there was a small church about our size. And if you remember that overnight his business stopped. And he essentially, after one or two months of basically funding the church with no income, he ran out of money.

And Natalia shared that with us. And so the trustees were very generous and said, we're going to support the church to keep going. And it was a little bit of a leap of faith, but also kind of a leap of compassion.

We didn't know this man. That's not something we would normally kind of just throw money at someone we didn't know. And we had questions. And I'll just be honest. We had questions about, you know, they don't align with our doctrine and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And so anyway, we decided to send him a chunk of money. And I don't even remember how much it was.

And it's kind of immaterial anyway. But the Lord used it. And I want to tell you that last week they moved into a new building that seats four and a half thousand people.

[2 : 42] And this morning Natalia sent me a video of that building full. So can I just encourage you in that, that we're going to look at what is a really, really mundane passage in the Bible.

And I say that as someone who loves the Bible. But you can't get away from this chapter just kind of being a little bit snoozy. And yet one of the things that we get out of it is that our part in God's grand mission worldwide is used by God even on a, even on the doorstep to our wall.

And actually, Natalia emailed me last week to say that there was shrapnel in the car park at 6 a.m. And it still opened at 11 a.m. And I'd be like, if that was here, I'd be like, no, we can't do church.

There's a bit of metal in the car park. And they're like, let's, let's go. So just want to encourage you in that, that, you know, sometimes, and I know that you do, you guys make sacrifices financially for the church and you give faithfully.

We're super aware of that. And I wanted to bring that to your attention that actually, you know, there's, there's a church in Kiev that is full to the brim this morning of people worshiping and praising God because of the small amount, really, in the grand scheme of things that we are able to, to send and support.

[4 : 08] And Natalia and Leonid have been back and forth ever since. And Leonid is trying to get a place at the Trinity Laban College of Music, which we've been able to help him do.

So hopefully he'll be starting there next September. And so we'll, hopefully we'll see a little bit more of them. But I'll post the video in the WhatsApp church group, all right, so that you can see it.

And just, I just thought I'd let you know that, all right. So 1 Timothy chapter 3, now I've given you the exciting stuff. Now you can take a nap. We started this last week, this chapter.

And the introduction really is about the purpose of leadership, right? It's all right. I feel like a little bit of competition. What's that like? Someone put in 1 Timothy 3 AI, give me a sermon. All right. This is where everybody stops and wants to know who it is.

[5 : 21] I had my phone go off on a wedding once, which is absolutely fine. The only problem is I was leading the wedding. So that was a little bit. Was it Steve? It wasn't yours, was it? No, okay.

So actually, I think it was at Peterborough. Peterborough? Is that a place? Peterborough. Man, I haven't had enough coffee. Peterborough Cathedral. That's where it was. And it went off. Everybody knew. Why? Because it's a massive, it's like gargantuan. And you know when your phone does it twice because you don't answer it.

Like it pings and it goes, you surely didn't hear it the first time. I'm going to let you know a second time. It's like children, right? It just keeps going. It wears you down. Anyway, we should probably get into it. You feel like that, right?

So look, the purpose of leadership is not to stand at the front of the church and make jokes. The purpose of leadership, and this is the section that Paul is talking about, is to align the church with God's mission and to ensure the gospel advances faithfully.

[6 : 30] And we looked at that last week. And we'll just recap that. And what we've been reading is that in this kind of main series, if you like, through 1 Timothy, is that the church should be a dangerous place.

And, you know, we prayed it wouldn't be a dangerous place like having a church building in Kiev. But a dangerous place, as in that church has gone from, you know, 30 to 4,500 in just a few years. Something's made that dangerous. It's a dangerous, the people in Kiev have deemed it's safer to be in the presence of God and be a target than not to be in the presence of God and be physically safe, right?

And so the church should be a dangerous place. It should be a dangerous place to the powers of darkness. And this morning, as we approach this section of the Bible, I want to ask us three questions.

They're coming on the screen. Three questions that I just want to put out there to start with. They're not even in the notes. How's that for living dangerously, right? They're not even in the notes. So you have to do the old school thing and write the questions down with a pen.

[7 : 38] For those of you who don't know, a pen is a cylindrical device filled with ink. Come on, Sandra. So it's almost like sword drill, isn't it?

Who brought their Bible? Who brought their pen? So or you could be like super young and hip and cool like Luke and just take a photo of the screen. And then we're there. What an example to all of us.

So three questions I want to ask this morning is the church exists to advance God's mission. Am I on it? Second question, leadership is stewardship.

Am I doing it? And question three, every act of service matters. Do I believe it? So the church exists to advance God's mission.

Am I doing it? Leadership is stewardship. Am I doing it? And then every act of service matters. Do I believe it? What we looked at last week was that Paul was placing this teaching on leadership, on church leadership, right in the middle of two extraordinary truths.

[8 : 44] So go back to chapter two. And it's just a recap from last week because I just think this is really paramount that we ground leadership and church leadership in the mission of God.

There are so many ways. The church has become dangerous in all the wrong ways. And one of the wrong ways has become dangerous is in leadership.

It's been misused. And oftentimes leadership is misused because it's not grounded in the gospel. It's not grounded in the mission of God. And so if you look at where Paul places this teaching on leadership, he places it right in the middle between these two bookends about the gospel.

So in chapter two, verse four, he said that God desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

And so we've seen how this is the very heartbeat of God, that he desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And so he gave Jesus and gave himself as a ransom for all.

[9 : 51] That's God's mission, if you like. And he will then save all who come to him through Jesus. And then in verse seven, Paul kind of moves from this grand statement of this is God's mission to almost saying this is how I've become part of God's mission.

This is what he says in verse seven. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. And he says a teacher of the Gentiles. So God's mission is to save all. And Paul has become part of God's mission to save all.

So that's not a massive stretch, is it, in our thinking that this is what God is doing. This is how he's enlisted Paul to do that. And most of us are quite comfortable with that.

And then right at the end of the section, look at the end of chapter three, which we've already looked at. So there's a little bit of, you know, we've looked at the end of chapter three before looking at the middle of chapter three.

Paul writes about the victory that Jesus has already won. He says in verse 16, Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He was manifest in the flesh, vindicated by the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world and taken up in glory.

[11 : 08] And so Paul is then describing what we might call this cosmic victory that Jesus has in the mission. And so all of that to say is that when God is on mission, he's going to succeed.

That's what it means. That anybody who comes to him through Jesus is going to be saved. And he is going to be saved. Why? Because of the victory that Jesus has had.

There's nothing more for God to do or for God to overcome for that to take place. And so Paul places then the role of church leaders within the mission of God.

So where God's mission is to make his saving grace known to the world, he has delegated that mission. He has given that mission to the church.

And again, so the question is the church exists to advance God's mission. Am I on it? If God has a mission and he has given the church that mission to continue, then the question for all of us, whether we are in leadership or not, is are we on that mission?

[12 : 21] Are we part of that mission? Are we part of what God is wanting to do? Now, you may say, well, that's a little bit sketchy, Simon, because clearly it's not in the text.

That's just an extrapolation from the text. I.e., you know, you have the mission at the beginning, you have the mission at the end, and in the middle, you've kind of made that up. Well, okay, hang fire. John chapter 20, verse 21, because there Jesus is super explicit.

He says, as the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you. So the Father has sent me, he says, almost like as the first missionary on his mission.

And so I'm sending you as missionaries for the same mission. The Father has sent me, I'm sending you. There is a continuation. And of course, perhaps the most famous is in Matthew 28, where Jesus says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

He doesn't say, go make converts of all nations. I know that needs to take place. Make converts, but make disciples. Make disciples of all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teach them to observe everything I've commanded you.

[13 : 35] That's God's mission. And he's given that same mission to the church, which means that we don't exist for ourselves. We don't exist to advance our own kingdoms.

But we exist to see all people saved. I wonder what Southampton would look like if the church in Southampton, the broader church, all Christians, and us included, really got hold of that.

That our purpose in life is to see all people saved. And to come to the knowledge of the truth through Jesus.

And so when it comes to this chapter, Paul is saying that in order for the church to do that, it needs some help. Amen? Right?

We all need help, don't we? So that's all that Paul is saying. Right? He's saying, look, if we're going to get serious about taking the gospel to all people, so that all people will be saved, we know how good you are at organizing stuff.

[14 : 53] You're going to need some help. And so church leadership exists to support and help the church so that it remains aligned with and equipped for that mission.

Now, I haven't explained that at length last week. Today, the text is concerned with how the church works practically to meet that aim. How do we do that? How do we organize ourselves so that we have a church that is fulfilling the mission of God?

So this is the question, actually, that Paul asks in verse 14. If you skip all the way down to almost the end of the chapter in verse 14, Paul says this. He says, I hope to come to you soon.

So he's writing to Timothy, who's in Ephesus. And he says, I hope to come to you soon. I'm eager to see you again. I'm eager to see the church Ephesus that I love.

You remember that he spent three years in Ephesus. All right. He knows the people well. And he says, but in the meantime, I'm writing these things so that you may know, verse 15, that if I'm delayed in coming to you, you may know how you ought to behave in the household of God.

[16:09] And then he reminds Timothy of the importance of the household of God, where he says, it is the church of the living God, which is interesting.

It's a pillar and a buttress or support of the truth. So what we see then in the New Testament is that we see a group of leaders who are called to help the church fulfill that mission.

And in verses one to six, we've already seen that Paul writes and tells Timothy who to look out for that is going to help Timothy to do that. It's not Timothy's job to do that.

Timothy is being told by Paul, Timothy, you're going to need some help to help the church. Go find this help. Who are you looking for? He says, well, look, this is a trustworthy saying, verse one, if anyone aspires the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

And when Paul talks about overseers, he's talking about two groups of people, elders and pastors. In Acts chapter 20, Paul gathered together the elders of the church at Ephesus.

[17:25] You remember, he didn't have time to go back into Ephesus. He says, would you meet me at Miletus? And so the elders of the church there kind of left Ephesus. They met Paul at Miletus.

And he says, it says there in verse 17 from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus, called the elders of the church to come to him. And in verse 28, he told them, pay careful attention to yourselves.

And to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, which is the same word used in this chapter in 1 Timothy, to care for, that's the Greek word for shepherd or pastor, to care for the church of God that he obtained with his own blood.

And so you see the same thing again there in 1 Peter chapter 5, where he says, I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

Shepherd. So, again, same word for pastor. Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, oversight, which is the same word there in 1 Timothy 3.

[18:35] So, what this means is that when we talk about overseers in 1 Timothy 3, we're talking about those we might also call elders and pastors. They are spiritual shepherds, spiritual leaders of the church.

They are, and we saw this last week, they are men who lead, they guide, they guard, they care for the church, so that the church can walk in to the mission of God. Which means that their leadership isn't about power, it's about purpose.

It's about helping the church become fruitful and faithful in their witness to Jesus in the world. Now, within that, the group of overseers, what we see are multiple elders per church.

showing that God values shared leadership over centralized power. This is so opposite to how the world often views leadership.

Some wonder why we don't have a single lone pastor or a committee with no leader. Right? And the reason is because the Bible calls us to both.

[19:52] It calls the church to have a team of elders to shepherd the church, and a lead pastor to provide vision and coordination and direction. And in Acts chapter 15, we see actually a perfect example of that.

If you want to note a technical term, it's first among equals or pastor-led plurality of elders. Their terms.

But look, in Acts chapter 15, we see this example where God has designed leadership in the church to be both plural and coordinated. I.e., there's a group of people, but there's also someone coordinating that group of people.

Because if you've ever been in, and this is no, our leaders probably want to cover their ears. If you've ever been in leadership for longer than five minutes, sometimes it's like herding ducks.

Right?

We need help, don't we? Andy's with me. Our cats, herding cats. I guess herding ducks isn't so tough.

[21 : 06] And so, but it needs a plurality. And it needs, so it needs, there needs to be a plurality and there needs to be coordinated. And Acts chapter 15 records one of seven church councils that's taken place throughout history.

Where church leaders have come together to decide really, really important church doctrine. And the first is actually in chapter 15 in Acts. And it's called the Jerusalem Council.

You never guess why. Because it took place in Jerusalem. I love simplicity. And it's with multiple church leaders.

Not just apostles. There's apostles. There's apostles. There's what we might call small a apostles, missionaries. And we might even call them, some of them elders of the church.

Maybe they're in Jerusalem. And they were all weighing in on this critical decision about Gentile believers. That was the big question. Can you be a Christian and also not a Jew?

[22 : 15] Right? And so, as a group of men, they gather and they consider the place of Gentiles in the church. And Peter gets up. And you know, it's going to always be Peter first, right? So Peter gets up and he kind of gives this kind of sort of sermon.

He kind of gives his view of things. And then Paul says something. And then Barnabas says something. And then it says in Acts chapter 15, verse 13, that when they'd finished, James replied. So James is, you know, there's a few Jameses in the New Testament, but this James is the half brother of Jesus. Same mom, different dad. So James is just sitting there thinking about what these other men have said.

And the Judaizers, you know, the ones who have brought their case, that Christians can only be Jews. They've brought their case. Peter has brought his case.

Paul has brought his case. Barnabas has brought his case. And now it's James's turn. And he kind of gives this recap of what Peter, Paul and Barnabas have just said.

[23 : 22] Actually, he doesn't really bring anything new. And so he says there in verse 19, then, therefore, my judgment, this is my pronouncement, James says. And this is more than just James sharing his opinion.

He's saying, okay, look, I've heard you Judaizers. I've put, Peter, I've listened to you. Paul and Barnabas, I hear you too. And this is what we're going to do.

And he then speaks decisively as the respected lead figure, as the one who's coordinating that group of men, summarizing scripture, and offering the final decision.

This is not a monarchy and it's not a hierarchy. The other leaders contribute, they confirm, they support the decision, but it shows the wisdom of having one leader who can provide vision and clarity, while at the same time, honoring the plurality of God's appointed leaders.

And in our context, and actually in many others, that role is given to someone who is called the pastor, who has the responsibility of equipping the church, including the leadership of the church, through the teaching of the Bible.

[24 : 40] And in Ephesians chapter four, Paul says that he gave, and he's talking about gifts, but he includes, he says he gave the church, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers.

And if you want to geek out on this, shepherds and teachers here likely refers to the same person, fulfilling both roles, not two separate people.

It's sometimes called the Granville Sharp rule of Greek grammar. You're welcome. It's talking about teaching shepherds, or teaching pastors.

So sometimes you'll see in certain churches, they'll have, sometimes they're called the lead elder, or the lead pastor, or the senior pastor, or the teaching pastor. That is the person out of Ephesians chapter four, verse 11.

And the purpose is verse 12, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. And so Paul is writing to Timothy, explaining that Timothy's task, Timothy's task, as the pastor of the church in Ephesus, is to look out for men he can appoint to become overseers of the church, so that they can support and help the church towards fulfilling the mission of God and the great commission to make disciples.

[26 : 09] So church leaders are to serve faithfully, prioritizing God's mission. And the challenge for those not called into church leadership is of course to support those leaders, to pray for those leaders, to encourage those leaders, to serve wherever needed, and to align your actions with the gospel.

So God has called the church to mission, am I on it? And then in verse eight, and this is really our text for this morning, and once we start reading, you'll be glad we've got there.

Sometimes I just think I'm too sarcastic for my own good. He moves now to talk about, not overseers, but he's talking about another group of people that he calls deacons.

So verse eight, deacons likewise. Okay, so what is a deacon? Well, if I can ask you to park your tradition as much as you can as to what a deacon is, or a lay deacon, or whatever other different types of deacons there are, what is a deacon?

Well, simply, a deacon makes sure that the physical needs, physical needs, don't distract from God's mission.

[27 : 37] but instead are directed towards it. Does that make sense? So a deacon's, a deacon's task, or what a deacon does is to make sure that physical needs, physical needs, don't distract from God's mission, but instead are directed towards it.

And the clearest example is actually found in the book of Acts, in chapter six. So have a look there. In Acts chapter six, see what takes place. In verse one, it'll be on the screen, but it is good for you to follow along in your own Bibles because this isn't a theater or cinema.

So in verse one, Luke tells us that in those days when the disciples were increasing in number, now pause there because we've just had, you know, report back from Ukraine.

Listen to what's happening in Jerusalem. to put it in context. Four chapters ago, there are 120 believers in Jerusalem.

120 met in the upper room. In fact, there were probably only 120 believers in the entire world. Three chapters ago, 3,000 people got added to that number in one day.

[28 : 56] Oh yeah, that's cool. Right? Then by the end of chapter four, or excuse me, the end of chapter two, we read that every day, that 3,120 was increasing every day.

Not every Sunday morning as they're doing altar calls around their, whatever they were doing.

Right? Every single day as the church goes, I'm called to God's mission.

I should do something about this. Every single day, that 3,120 became 3,121. And then you do the maths.

So, and then two chapters later, in Acts chapter four, verse four, the number of men alone came to about 5,000.

So, in two chapters, the church has gone from 120 to 5,000. By the middle of chapter five, it says in verse 14 that more than ever, believers were added to the Lord.

[30 : 17] More than ever. We've only had three chapters. Like, how do you, how do you even measure more than ever? Right? So, every single day, the church is getting bigger to the point where we get to 5,000.

And then Luke says, yeah, but it's getting even bigger than it was before. Now, that excites me because, like, I know the pedigree of half of those disciples.

We know that, right? Like, most of them aren't educated. They're not well to do. They don't have money. Like, they can't organize themselves for toffee. Right? And yet, God used them in an amazing way.

And you could say, you could say, if you want to be pessimistic about it, you could say, oh yeah, but that was the birth of the church and God was doing something special. Yeah, okay, be boring. I much prefer to go down the line of going, yeah, but God could do that again.

Right? So, in chapter 6, what we see is this church has grown exponentially. And it's, the growth is exciting until, they say the exponential growth is exciting until exponential growth becomes your to-do list.

[31 : 40] Do you know what I'm saying? Like, if it, if something grows too quickly, that's a problem. And, um, I can't even begin to fathom the kind of problems that the early church were facing.

Luke doesn't tell us, but we do know human nature and we do know the problems of having even, like, just think about it, Christmas.

Right? You have Christmas, there's problems, isn't it? That's just your family. Imagine having 5,000 people rocking up. And so, this is what happened in verse, in chapter 6, is that all of these people were gathering and a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

So, like, evidently, they've got a food ministry going on. I don't think it's, I don't think it's like church fellowship meal. Like, I don't think it's that.

I think this is more kind of like we need to feed the poor because, of course, in the first century, there's no social security, there's no social help, there's no other charities doing that, there weren't food banks, there weren't this, there weren't that, and so, the church took on and went, you know what?

[33 : 01] There's poor people, we need to help them. And so, of all that, listen, and this is just crazy, this is how church shouldn't be, right?

Of all of the problems that seem to surface, the first problem that arose in the church was discrimination. Isn't that sad?

Like, the first thing that's mentioned, when you think that, when Paul says that God desires all people to be saved, and then you flick forward to Revelation, and you see all people from all tribes, nations, tongues, saved in heaven, the first problem that the church had was one of discrimination. And so, evidently, you know, again, the church was feeding the poor, and among those were the widows, and the complaint is that the Jewish believers were looking down on the Greek believers. And so, to deal with the problem, verse 12, sorry, verse 2, the 12 summoned the number of the disciples, now, I don't think that's all 5,000, that's probably, you know, a core group, and said, it's not right that we should give up preaching the word to serve tables.

So, look, they are outlining their priorities as overseers. They're saying, look church, we can't do everything, you can't expect us to do everything. They understand something, actually, that every leader eventually has to come to grips with, we can't do everything and nor should we.

[34 : 34] They said, it's not right for us to give up the preaching of the word of God to serve tables. Not because serving was beneath them, but because they knew what they were called to.

And actually, that's the tension often of leadership, that every need is real and every person matters. But listen, if your leaders are at every meeting and they solve every crisis and they fill every gap on the rotor, sooner or later, you're going to be without leaders because they'll burn out. God didn't design leaders to be superheroes. And if leaders do everything, then the church becomes dependent upon them rather than Jesus and actually, the church stops walking in the mission of God.

It's when leaders stay faithful to their calling, the church becomes mobilized and this is the beauty of what the apostles do next. In verse 3, they say, therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, who we will appoint to this duty and we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

They're not outsourcing compassion. They're not saying compassion's not our deal. They're not saying, well, I'm not really a very compassionate person so someone else can deal with that.

They're actually helping the church.

[35 : 59] These seven men stepped in so that, listen, physical needs didn't distract from God's mission but instead are directed towards it.

This could have derailed the church. What, there's discrimination in the church? Like, all of the Hellenists would have just disappeared. All of the Gentile believers, we would be an exclusively Jewish church.

The Jewish council wouldn't have met. So, these seven men stepped in to meet the physical needs, not because there were physical needs, but so that God's mission wasn't distracted and they could point people to that mission.

They didn't just serve tables. And listen, I don't want us as a church, as Calvary, to reduce the service of God down to just do you hear me?

Nobody's just setting up chairs. Nobody's just brewing coffee. Nobody's just watching kids or just cleaning the floor before everyone arrives.

[37 : 17] Every act of service is sacred when it's done in the name of Jesus and it's part of His mission. And in the same spirit that empowers the preacher and the pulpit empowers the person stacking chairs in the back.

Which means that there's no small jobs in the church, only small views of God's mission. We had no idea that when we sent money to Ukraine what God was going to do with it.

It was small and actually in the grand scheme of things seemed insignificant. But nothing small and insignificant on God's mission.

And so what happens look at a result verse 7 in Acts chapter 6 the word of God continued to increase.

Why? Because at that point the apostles were unable to do what they were called to do. The number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

[38 : 33] Look that's what happens when everyone does their part not in isolation but in sync. one body moving together under one mission. It's not a hierarchy it's harmony. The body of Christ move it as one for the sake of the gospel.

Now turn back to 1 Timothy we see that Paul then gives a list of counter qualities that a deacon should have. And let me just say also that because Paul has given this list he's not describing here Christians who happen to be serving.

That would make no sense. because he's going to say in verse 10 look here's the argument let me just set up the argument for you. Everybody serves everybody should be serving.

Amen. But not everybody should be a deacon. Amen. Right. And verse 10 shows us that because verse 10 Paul says let them serve as deacons.

so it's not the argument is well you know everybody serves we don't need deacons because everybody just serves. That's not Paul's point is that yes everybody serves but there needs to be some people coordinating that service and that's what Paul is talking about here in this chapter.

[39 : 48] He's talking about people who have a level of responsibility for a certain area of the mission. So for example the person putting out the chairs on a Sunday morning is responsible for putting out the chairs.

I don't know who did it this morning you did a great job. They're in lines. Like we don't think that that happens like by chance right? We know that don't we?

Yeah like you know big bang chairs in rows. It's a leap but it's not as far as some people have leapt. Like the point the point is is that yes there are people who come in and put chairs out on a Sunday morning and we are grateful for them because you guys get to sit down for an hour.

They're not the most comfy but you do get to sit down right? There is a level of responsibility you know whether it's Tim or Simon or it's Andy or someone else you put the chairs out great but look there's also another level of chair responsibility and you're like I didn't even know that right?

Like there's a whole there's a whole thing of chair responsibility and in some churches they have they have maps and like flow charts and all kinds of things manuals who to call in the event that the chairs aren't out but look for example if we showed up here this morning and there were no chairs put out like I probably wouldn't ask Simon or Tim or Andy why we don't have any chairs like I can talk about this because Joe's not here this morning I'd be going to Joe I'd be going Joe where's the dude where's the chairs?

[41 : 42] I'd be asking Joe why we don't have any chairs there's a different level of responsibility imagine I'll just give you a peek into my world imagine that we showed up on a Sunday morning and there weren't any chairs like like the bloke who showed up on Sunday morning or the woman who showed up on Sunday morning to put the chairs out they've done they've done a faithful job but there's no chairs available I'm not going to be asking Simon I'd be like where's the chairs?

what have you done with the chairs? right why haven't you coordinated with the school that we have chairs? like Simon hasn't got a foggiest about what I'm talking about right but Joe he would understand that completely why?

because he has a level of responsibility over the chairs we should get him a little badge shouldn't we? when he watches this back on YouTube he's going to be like what on earth?

chair monitor that's what we need and in some circles of course you know if the greeters have those lanyards the chair monitor also has to have lanyards because we have to create everybody everybody's created equal anyway so look Paul is saying that there are people who serve in an official capacity as deacons they serve beyond the level of responsibility of just simply and again it's not just simply but of responding to the email on a Monday asking you to set out the chairs right there's someone who goes we need to make sure we have enough chairs and we need to make sure we have enough chairs for when God decides to bring revival because have you thought about that well no because I'm just putting out chairs I'm just putting out chairs in in sevens and fives that's all I have to think about on a Sunday morning but someone's thought about you know what happens if there is revival and God decides to bring revival in here are we going to sit on the floor or are we going to have chairs like newflash that's been a discussion why because I'm anticipating the Lord's going to do something are you so we have to be ready for when he does something anyway I'm going off on way too many challenges this morning no more coffee so they serve as

deacons they are tasked with ensuring this is what a deacon is they are tasked with ensuring the physical needs of the church don't distract from God's mission but instead are directed towards it do we have enough chairs yes do we have enough chairs for a revival yes do we have enough chairs for a kind of acts 2 3 4 5 revival not yet because we don't know where to put them there's a different level of responsibility here's what they need to be

Paul says they must be dignified or respected they shouldn't be double tongue so they don't say one thing to one person to say another thing to another person we've always all met those kind of people they are keepers of unity in that sense all right actually when we look at Acts chapter 6 isn't that what they did by their actions they were keepers of unity not addicted to much wine which speaks for itself not greedy for dishonest gain again it speaks for itself they must pay their taxes they must put in a shift right they must verse 9 hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience which just means that they must not only believe the gospel but they live it out in such a way that their lives and their beliefs are in line with one another they have a clear conscience about what they believe about God and how they're living for God and in verse 10 he says let them also be tested first or approved and let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless and in verse 11

[45 : 51] Paul confuses everyone look at the problem he opens verse 11 with their wives likewise now you may go I don't even see the problem and it's a problem and it's a problem that there are volumes and volumes written about because look he says their wives likewise in verse 11 and then in verse 12 he says let deacons each be the husband of one wife and it seems on the face of it that verse 11 is just kind of randomly thrown in there before he comes back and speaks about deacons again so let me tell you a couple of things about these verses and where I've kind of landed on these having unfortunately read lots of those volumes that I've just quoted firstly Paul is not referring to the wives of men who are deacons so in verse 11 he's not referring to the wives of men those men who are deacons and we know that firstly because the word wives there in verse 11 is in the Greek super ambiguous so as it is actually in many languages so it can mean women or wives and actually most translations translate that verse as women there's only actually a few the ESV translates it wives the King James translates it wives but the NASB most of the others translate it as women and frankly

I'm not too sure why the ESV translates it that way but anyway so it can mean women or wives secondly if Paul intends wives to mean the wives of men who are deacons the next problem we face is whose wives is Paul talking about because the word there isn't in the Greek either so who is he actually talking about all we have at best is wives not their wives their isn't their yeah right and so who is he talking about so the first suggested answer to that is that Paul is writing about deacons wives but if that's correct then we should also wonder why Paul would single out deacons wives and not mention the wives of overseers in the previous section he doesn't mention them does that mean that they can just do whatever they want they can be whoever they are he would in one way place greater a greater requirement on deacons wives than on overseers wives in addition to that look at verse 12

Paul says let deacons be the husband of one wife that's super crystal clear isn't it and it's super crystal clear in the Greek if you want to go and check it out and I would encourage you to do so right there's no mistake about that and so here's the issue is that Paul is speaking there in verse 12 about the deacon's wife and it is super clear so if Paul meant the wives of deacons in verse 11 why did he not make it clear like he has made it clear in verse 12 so in my mind this can't possibly be speaking about the wives of men who are deacons there is little to admire in my opinion that of that interpretation even though many many translations and the ESV is one of them continue to translate it that way the alternative is that wives means woman or women and of course this also causes problems and I can't I'm not going to say that this is an easy chapter and whatever interpretation you have has no problems because that's just not true they all have problems because when then we have to ask well what women and I think the answer to that is actually seen like this in verses 7 to 10

Paul is talking about a group of men and women called deacons we've all read something into that text that doesn't belong there as soon as we read deacons to our mind we came out with men the text doesn't say that we've read that in we have to acknowledge and we have to be honest that we've read that in as an interpretation there's no specific pronouns or restrictions in those verses that would require deacons to be men and so verses 7 to 10 is talking about a group of men and

women called deacons they are general characteristics for both men who are deacons and women who are also deacons and then in verse 11 he's talking specifically to the group of women in that or the women in that group and then in verse 12 he's talking specifically to the men in that group before then summarizing in verse 13 for me that is the best route forward now are there problems with that route yeah absolutely are we going to go into those problems this morning absolutely not again you're welcome all to say look it's not an easy passage but he says there in kind of the summary in verse 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 which means that as you serve you are you are getting back what you put in there is there is a there is a grace that is being applied to your life and so in verse one to six just as a summary we have a group of men who are responsible for and have authority over the mission of God in the church to help and to support the church the people to fulfill God's mission and in the rest of the chapter you have verse seven to I guess it would be thirteen you have a group of men and women who are meeting the practical needs of the church so that God's mission can continue so it doesn't stall so that there is not division so there's not disunity so they can continue so that those physical needs are met and the church can be redirected to the mission of God so you can see how look the the overseers and the deacons work together and I know that that's not the case in many churches like I speak to church leaders all the time and there seems to be this division of overseers and deacons that shouldn't be the case there should be there should be a unity there should be a harmony and most oftentimes when there isn't a harmony when there is division or disunity it's because one group or sometimes both groups have got their eyes off of the purpose for their leadership their purpose for their leadership is not power it's not hierarchy it's not a monarchy it is the gospel of

[53 : 51] God the mission of God out into this world and so here's the challenge with all of this God didn't save you to sit comfortably in neat rows however much we are blessed with the tidy nice rows with the tidy nice chairs God hasn't designed the church for this I'm not saying this is wrong don't panic next week we will still come back and do this exact same thing Lord willing right but that's not a design that's not the end design for the church the end design is not for us to sit comfortably in neat rows to sip on our filter coffee to smile politely while the world rots he saved you to join his mission he saved you to step into the battlefield of grace to live a life that screams with the reality of the gospel and your time and your energy and your gifts and your words and your very life they are not your own they're entrusted to you to push back darkness to make the lost known and to build his church and the mission of

God is not something that we put off to tomorrow there is an urgency about it the enemy is real and our complacency costs lives eternally and so if we carry anything from this chapter and I hope we do if we carry anything from this chapter it is to decide today not to live for ourselves but to live for God's mission to be on his mission and that means look a number of things it means laying down our pride it means laying down our ego that we talked about in chapter two it means laying down our comfort it means laying down our excuses and joining him in the work that he's called you to do and maybe you don't know what you've been called to do and I could speak for hours about calling I think God's calling is sometimes like a lightning bolt that hits you I think sometimes it is a very gentle let's walk in this and see how we go I think both are true depending on who you are but listen don't don't stop being engaged in the mission of God while you wait for your calling because I don't want to put a statistic on it but let's do it anyway because everybody else does 99.9% of the time I don't even know what that number means you discover your calling as you are serving and so will we decide to do that will we decide to be a church that is dangerous living on mission on God's mission not ours let's pray father we come before you not with perfect hearts by any stretch Lord not even with polished words Lord we come to you desperate for your grace happy that we found it desiring that others do so as well Lord it's not a small thing for us to understand that we are called to your mission Lord we understand that there are things in our life that would need to change for that to be true and we confess Lord that sometimes it's easier not to do those things or to call those barriers or challenges or excuses because because well quite frankly we're quite comfortable as we are thank you very much Lord we pray against that mentality Lord we pray Lord that you would open our eyes and see a world that is lost in the need of Jesus Lord and that might be someone that we speak to at the petrol station it might be a very good friend it might be a family member or it might be someone that we've just met for the first time Lord

we pray that you would give us eyes that you have that you would see people as lost and broken and in need of a saviour and you would equip us and help us Lord to not only step out and reach out but to speak up Lord to give that hope to this world Lord and that hope isn't Calvary Chapel and it's not certainly the leadership here it is the one who does lead this church who is Jesus and so we pray Lord as we leave this place Lord we want to be walking with you on your mission and we pray Lord that we would Lord give us opportunities Lord Lord we believe that you give us opportunities we just struggle in taking them and so

[59 : 27] Lord we pray Lord that we would see those opportunities you give us you would give us boldness to take them and even if it's just a word or two about how good you are Lord help us to Lord just to be the puzzle in that person's life Lord that where the gospel is shared Lord that it would not return to you void Lord but it would accomplish the purpose it sent Lord we pray Lord that you would help us to be a church that is on mission for you Lord as we sing and as we pray and as we praise you now Lord give us this just this grand this grand view that ever since Genesis 3 you've been on mission to save people and what a privilege it is that you call us to that Lord we want to give you praise Lord we want to give you worship now Lord so help us fill our hearts and minds with things of you Lord we ask in Jesus name

Amen