**deacon ordination message**

(Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8,12)

We have set aside this morning to ordain two of our faithful men as deacons of Ridge Point Fellowship—Nathan Collins and Daniel Murrey. Before I call for the elders of the church to come forward and to lay hands on and to pray for these men, I believe it would be wise to look at what the New Testament says about the office of deacon. The English word “deacon” is used only three times in the New Testament, but there is no doubt that the office of deacon is a vital and important office in the local church and one that God takes seriously.

It is important for us to understand why God has designed this office in the local church because there is a lot of confusion concerning it. In some churches, a deacon may be seen as simply someone who does menial tasks like cleaning restrooms and raking leaves. In other churches, deacons are essentially the equivalent of what we would call “elders” here at Ridge Pointe. In other words, deacons are in charge of all that the church is and all that it does. So as you can see, what one church might believe about this office can differ greatly from what another church might believe about it.

So, first, I would like us to look at the role of an elder, and then, the role of a deacon in the local church. How are they similar and a how are they different? Then, just before we anoint Nathan and Daniel as deacons, I would like to share some words of motivation concerning their future ministry as deacons of Ridge Pointe Fellowship.

**1. The Role of Elders**

**Philippians 1:1**-----1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

**Bishops** = episkopois [overseers]. This is another word for “Elders.”

**Deacons** = diakonois

Acts 20:28 is a verse that helps us understand the role of an elder in a local church. Paul is leaving Ephesus and the elders will never see him again. And he says to the elders:

**Acts 20:28**-----28 Therefore **take heed** to yourselves and **to all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd the church of God** which He purchased with His own blood.

Elders are God’s overseers in a local church. Their job is to shepherd (or, to spiritually care for) the members of the local church. The Apostle Peter wrote the local church and said:

**1 Peter 5:1–2**-----1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder … 2 **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you**, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly…

Concerning elders, Alexander Strauch wrote:

Just as a household steward in Paul’s day was charged with managing funds and people, God’s steward must manage church resources, plan budgets, delegate tasks to others, encourage use of members’ gifts, solve problems, make decisions, establish church policies, set up structures to accomplish specific work, and lead in one or more ministries of the church. Moreover, he must carefully teach the Word, judge issues and doctrines, provide counsel and education, resolve conflict among members, and care for those in the church household who cannot care for themselves.

Now, if this is the basic role of the elders of the local church, what role does God have in mind for deacons?

**2. The Role of Deacons**

As we saw in Philippians 1:1, elders and deacons are connected. They each play a specific role in the local church. 1 Tim 3:8-12 is clear that deacons are not simply executing tasks around the church like repair and upkeep. Deacons clearly occupy a position of recognized authority and lead in certain official duties. Deacons are acknowledged church officials who have been examined and approved by the elders and have met the qualifications laid out in Scripture for possessing this office.

So what is the role of a deacon. Though Paul does not give a specific definition, the most reasonable definition of a New Testament deacon is that deacons are the official assistants to the elders. The idea is that of a subordinate carrying out an assignment on a superior’s behalf and having full authority to execute the superior’s delegated task.

**Acts 19:22**-----22 So he [Paul] sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered [diakanóuntōn] to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

Deacons are church-approved assistants or aides to the elders.

As the elders give themselves to prayer and the teaching of God’s Word (as well as the shepherding of God’s flock) God provides them with assistants. These assistants are not required to teach or to have skill in doing that (like elders), but they are to assist and they are to be dedicated to God and obeying Him:

**1 Timothy 3:8–12**-----8 Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, 9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. 10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless. 11 Likewise, *their* wives *must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.

 **3. Charge to the Deacons**

**1 Timothy 3:8** ----- Likewise deacons must be **reverent**…

**1. God-fearing**He takes the things of God seriously. ------------- **1 Timothy 3:8** ----- Likewise deacons must be…not double-tongued…
 **2. Trustworthy**

A “double-tongued” person is someone who speaks out of both sides of his mouth, in other words, can’t be trusted in what he says.

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**1 Timothy 3:8** ----- Likewise deacons must be…not given to much wine…

**3. Not a drunkard**

“Given to” = addicted---it’s not something an elder or deacon is to be pre-occupied with.

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**1 Timothy 3:8** ----- Likewise deacons must be…not greedy for money…

**4. Not selfish**

When a man has an intense and selfish desire to possess or acquire money, if he lacks a spirit of generosity, he is not qualified to be either an elder or a deacon. When someone is greedy, an **excessive desire** for money is present.

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**1 Timothy 3:9** ----- Likewise deacons must be…**holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.**

**5. Having a clean conscience**

A man who is being considered for the position of a deacon must not only **know** the truths of the NT, he must be **living** them out---he must have a clear conscience concerning them.

**1 Timothy 3:10** ----- But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, **being found blameless**.

The goal is that once tested, the man will be found to be blameless, or, above reproach:

**6. Above reproach**

To be a person whose life and character cannot be faulted by other people.

If the opinion of others is that a certain man is not to be trusted, a low-life, someone who doesn’t pay his bills, is dishonest, etc., he is not to be considered for the office of deacon.

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**1Timothy 3:12** ----- Let deacons be **the husbands of one wife**

**7. Devoted and loyal to his wife**

This phrase “husband of one wife” means “a one-woman man.” As with elders, a deacon cannot be a flirt.

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**1Timothy 3:12** ----- …ruling their children and their own houses well…

**8. One who has a well-managed family**

Leaders in the local church must have well-behaved children who are under control and respectful. Paul is telling Timothy that if a man cannot does not have children who honor and submit to him, he cannot be a church leader.