

## A Few Good Men

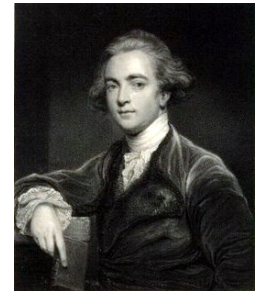
Growing up in the 1980s, I used to love seeing the commercials for the United States Marine recruiting efforts. The commercials would come on the television and show some of the many Marine activities, their victorious strategies and the faithfulness to the Corp attitudes. Then they would show a proud marine, fully decked out in uniform,



Then, in 1992, there was a very good movie in the theatres, *A Few Good Men*. It starred actor powerhouses like Jack Nicholson, Tom Cruise, Demi Moore, Keefer Sutherland and Kevin Bacon. The name alone commanded attention, "A Few Good Men." It was the story of a murder investigation and a trial in the United States Military. The cover of the movie showed all the soldiers in the dress garb. Across the bottom was the title, *A Few Good Men!*

Was this something that only sprung up in my lifetime? I know that anyone from my generation who heard the saying, A Few Good Men, knew it was talking about the United States Marines. This actually was a slogan long before my generation.

William Jones was a captain of Marines in the at Providence, RI in the late 1790s. He was a good military leader during a tough time in our country. On March 20, 1779, he took an ad out in the Providence Gazette, recruiting for "a few good Men" to engage in "a short Cruize" on a military ship. More than two hundred years later, to this day, the United States Marine Corps still uses that slogan to recruit soldiers. We are looking for "a few good men."



Going back even a little further, we find the concept being brought forth in the first-century. By the mid-30s, with the church in her infancy in Jerusalem, Satan was attempting to undermine the work of God.

Acts 6:1-7, Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.<sup>2</sup> So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables."<sup>3</sup> "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."<sup>4</sup> "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."<sup>5</sup> The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.<sup>6</sup> And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.<sup>7</sup> The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

## A Few Good Men

The church was really growing and there were many converts being brought in. There were two groups of widows that were in the church family in Jerusalem. There were the true-blue Jewish widows. They were the ones who were born into the Jewish faith, lived Jewish lives among the Jewish culture and eventually converted to Christ. Then there were the proselyte widows. They were the ones who did not grow up in a Greek culture, not carrying with them a Jewish lineage. When it came time for the church to help all the widows, the proselytes were being treated like second-class citizens. This was because all the leadership of the church at that time was Jewish, for there were not any gentiles added to the church until Acts 10.

The leaders of the church, and some say the ones who were viewed as the elders, were the Apostles. They had a ministry of the word of God and prayer to tend to. For them to be drawn into serving the tables of the widows would have hinder the ministry of the word of God and prayer. They put forth the concept, we are looking for a “Few Good Men.” They said, “*Select from among you seven men of good reputation.*” Translated in the modern-day version, “Let us gather together a few good men.”

They strategically chose seven men, all of whom had Greek names and likely Greek backgrounds. They were the ones who would serve on the table, making sure that the outreach ministries of the church would be carried on without partiality. Most consider these the first deacons of the church of Christ in Jerusalem. The most beautiful part was that the word of the Lord kept spreading. Satan wanted nothing more than to shut down Jesus’ church from the very beginning, but the leaders of the church followed the plan of God and the work kept growing.

This is the pattern for the churches of Christ today. In the previous lesson, we covered God’s design to have leaders in the church called elders. They men of certain godly standing, who lead by example and experience. They have reached the level of maturity for which the followers in the church should strive. In this lesson, we will cover another position of leaders in the churches of Christ. They are called the deacons.

Not as much is said about the deaconship of the church as there is about the eldership. There is however plenty for which to guide us. We find the primary passage in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

1 Timothy 3:8-13, Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; <sup>9</sup> Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. <sup>10</sup> And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. <sup>11</sup> Even so *must* *their* wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup> Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. <sup>13</sup> For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. (KJV)

Just like the elders, those who become deacons in the church also have qualities which would identify them as good deacons. We will look at each of these qualities and use the information for which to bring forth a list of men who would make good deacons in the church at New Road.

# A Few Good Men

## List of Qualities to Look For

- 1) Grave
- 2) Not double-tongued
- 3) Not given to much wine
- 4) Not greedy of filthy lucre
- 5) Holding to the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience
- 6) Must first be proved
- 7) Blameless
- 8) Must rule their own houses well.
  - a. One wife: She must be grave, not slanderers, faithful in all things.
  - b. Children: Must be ruled well.

There are eight qualities which the deacons candidates must have. We shall cover each of them in detail.

A. A candidate for deacon must be grave.

What does it mean to be grave? It means to have an attitude of reverence, to be honorable and venerable. We have a word in the English which comes from the same base word of grave, which is gravity. When one experiences gravity, it pulls them down to earth. To be grave is to be down to earth. The men we put forth to the elders who we feel is a good candidate to be a deacon, they should have exhibited a certain respect and seriousness for the cause of Christ.

B. A candidate for deacon must not be double-tongued.

Possessing a double-tongue means to say something from one wide of your mouth, then turning around and saying something else. A good candidate for the deaconship is one that says what he means and means what he says. He is not into tickling the ears of people, but very consistent to the word and the mission. It is likely you already know how this candidate feels about the issues, because they have been absolutely consistent in what they have said.

C. A candidate for deacon must not be given to much wine.

The candidates for elder are not to be given to wine, but the deacons are not to be given to much wine. What does this mean? Is this permission for the deacon to have cases of beer in his fridge and have a few cold ones when he is finished with a day of hard work?

It is unlikely that is what Paul meant when the Spirit enlightened him to reveal these words. The Bible is very clear than the sin of drunkenness is absolutely wrong (Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 6:10; Galatians 5:21). Do we use the state legislators of the United States to determine what is drunk, or should we try to use the Bible for our standard? It is not a sin for a deacon to drink, but it is a sin to become a stumbling block to others in pursuit of their freedoms (Romans 14). Somewhere between to first drink and being a stumbling block to another is where we find the God recognized stand of too much wine. Even with that, there are variables. "Too much wine" can be only one beer if there is a brother or sister near us that has struggled with alcoholism. A deacon taking the youth group to Applebee for lunch can also be, if the deacon decides he wants to have a

## A Few Good Men

beer with his burger. How many beers should a deacon have in front of the youth group before it could be considered a legitimate stumbling block? If you are a candidate for deacon, but you have not hidden your love for the strong drink, beer and wine, then there might be a risk of you never becoming a deacon. The best and only safe thing to do would be to always skip the first drink, resulting in no stumbling blocks, no public drunkenness and no limitation on your God-given leadership potential.

That leads to one other question. Why are the elders treated a bit differently than the deacons in this qualifications? It is likely because they are expected to be more mature than the deacons. The deacons are under the elders, not the other way around. They usually have more age and experience than the deacons in that area. It should be a zero factor at that stage of leadership.

- D. A candidate for deacon must not be greedy of filthy lucre.  
Like the candidates for elder, the best candidates for deacon are also not greedy of material gain. If there is a brother that has to have the fanciest car, the fanciest house, the fanciest clothing, possessing an attitude of get all you can and can all you get, then this is not a good prospect for the deaconship. You want someone who is people-driven, not money driven.
- E. A candidate for deacon must hold to faith in good conscience.  
The men for whom you offer your suggestions for becoming a deacon must hold to the faith with a good conscience. They should come across as seriously convicted of the mission of the church and Christ. They should be viewed as a vessel for faith in God. When they speak of Christ and the church, they will come across as sincere. Their presentation of God in their lives should come across as pure.
- F. A candidate for deacon must first be proved.  
We should not choose our candidates for deacon based on potential growth, but someone who is already doing the work of a deacon. They bring a proven track record of success in the service to the Lord. How else could they become a lead servant for others without ever having done the job. Would you want someone with no experience managing you on your job? Of course not. God does not want his leaders to lack experience as well.
- G. A candidate for deacon must be blameless.  
They should not have a reputation of bad service to the Lord and the church. If the person you are thinking about nominating for the deaconship of New Road, and they have a track record of controversy, of losing their temper, of bullying, of being insensitive and controversial, then take that person off the list.
- H. A candidate for deacon must rule their own houses well.  
A man's first responsibility is to making sure his family is running well. How can a man effectively serve as a deacon if his family is a wreck. He cannot truly do the work of a deacon with having applied the same techniques to his first flock. You can tell quite a bit from looking at his wife and children.

## A Few Good Men

- a. His Wife:
  - i. She must be grave.  
Her presentation of faith must also reflect gravity. How does it look if the husband is down to earth, but the wife is flighty? I could rob him of all effectiveness, rendering his leadership role in service to the church.
  - ii. She must not be a slanderers.  
Many husbands will confide in their wives the many things they face in this life. What happens is the wife then spreads slander against all the members of the church as she finds out about them through the ministries. If the candidate you are persuaded to nominate has a wife that is prone to gossip, then take that man off the list. Also, whenever you take someone off your list, consider the following. Go to that person and let them know you have seen many of these good qualities in them, but there needs to be a little work on some other issues. Encourage them to pursue the path of excellence.
  - iii. She must be faithful in all things.  
She needs to demonstrate a deep faith in God, a deep devotion to the people of God, and a valiant support of her husband's work.
- b. His Children.
  - i. Though his children do not have to be believers, they still need to be respecting of their own parents.
  - ii. They should be well-behaved and respectful toward God and the church family.
  - iii. Just ask yourself, is the man for which I desire to nominate demonstrate good management skills of his own family? If you cannot answer yes, then take the man off your list.

So, there you have it. Deacons are leading servants of servants. God did not leave us guessing as to what the church should look for in their selection of deacons. He gave a smaller list of qualities which can best serve at this capacity. To not listen to God's advice will bring us a curse. Listening to Him in this process will only further the work of the Kingdom in Waco, TX.

The elders are looking for a few good men because God is looking for a few good men. Therefore, you must be looking for a few good men. Here is your opportunity to put these names forth for the future of the work of the church.