

Deacon Ministry
The Character Qualities of Deacons
1 Timothy 3:8-13

September 14, 2025

HDBC

This is the 2nd in a three-part series of teaching on the Deacon Ministry in the local church. We've deviated from our Joshua study temporarily. We will return to it the first Sunday in October.

According to the N. T. there are two offices or official positions of leadership ministry in the church. They are pastors and deacons. Each have distinct and important roles in leading the church. In this study we are doing a deep dive into what the Bible teaches about deacon ministry and of how the deacon ministry functions in our church.

In just a few weeks we will begin our annual deacon-selection process. The goal of this series is to prepare the church for this process. You will select two men to join our active deacon ministry. We want you to allow the Bible and the Holy Spirit to direct you as you do so. It is also designed to inform and prepare those who might be nominated to the deacon ministry. We want you to have all the information you need as you seek the Lord's will.

Last week: Acts 6. This was the situation that likely led to the establishment of the deacon ministry in local churches.

This week: 1 Tim 3:8-13. The character qualities of men who should be selected. Qualifications for deacon service.

Next week: I'm going to walk you through the specific ways the deacon ministry works at HDBC.

Now, let's look at 1 Timothy 3:8-13, which deals with the character qualities of those who serve as deacons. I want to walk through the text first so we can understand the meaning. Then I want to come back and share how HDBC is applying this to our ministry. We'll go quickly through the text.

1. Men of Dignity

Could be translated **serious** or **stately**. It contains the idea of being serious in mind as well as character.

Seriousness about life and the things that are important. Doesn't mean you can't have a sense of humor or enjoy laughter. It does mean you have a clear understanding of the things that are really important in life. It means you know when it is time to be serious, respectful, thoughtful. This character causes others to respect this person. The next three are negatives. Things that deacons are **not to be**.

2. Not Double-tongued

The word is **dilogos**, two-tongued. This is the only place this word is used in the N.T. It could refer to a *gossip*, but likely has another meaning. *Saying one thing to one person and another to someone else*. Idea of hypocrisy. A deacon must be a man of his word who can be trusted to speak the truth to everyone, regardless of the situation. His speech must be consistent, honest and full of integrity.

3. Not Addicted to Wine

Addicted to means to *turn one's mind to* or *to occupy one's mind with*. He is not to be preoccupied with drinking alcohol or allow it to influence his life.

4. Not Fond of Sordid Gain

Disgraceful gain. Making money or financial gains through dishonest or immoral means. The deacon must never use his position as a deacon as a means for making money. Many scholars believe deacons in the early church were directly involved in handling the money of the church. Not so much in most churches today.

5. Doctrinally Sound

This is a call for doctrinal and moral integrity. *Mystery of the faith* refers to the New Testament. Paul used the word **mystery** often in his writings. It refers to truth that had been hidden but was now revealed.

This is great description of the New Testament. The Old Testament scriptures anticipated the culmination of God's plan, which was revealed in the New Testament. Some of the things that remained cloaked in mystery in the Old Testament are made clear in the N.T.

This is a call for doctrinal soundness. The addition of the phrase, *with a clear conscience* indicates that the deacons' beliefs must be real. He must not simply say he believes the right things, but must actually believe them.

6. Beyond Reproach

This does not mean they have to be perfect. We all have flaws. We are all broken. However, this is a call for deacons to be men whose reputations are strong within the church and outside the church. Deacons should not live lives that are involved in activities that would cause others to look at them with suspicion.

7. Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family (11-12)

There are two clear instructions for deacons, related to marriage and the family in verse 12. But first we need to address verse 11.

Depending on your translation of the Bible you might find the word **wives** or you might find the word **women**. That's where it's interesting.

The word can legitimately be translated in either way. Neither is a stretch. The context has to determine the meaning. Unfortunately the context here provides little help. There are good arguments for both. The word found in your translation signals how the translators have chosen to understand the verse. Here are the options:

- 1) **Wives**. Wives of the deacons who happened to be married.
- 2) **Women**. Women who serve as deaconesses. If this is the case, they would not have served with the men, but as a separate group, focusing on ministering to women in the church.

At HDBC we lean toward this being a reference to wives and our structure is based on that understanding. We recognize that there is legitimate room for difference of interpretation here. But now let's look at the two things related to marriage and family that are clear.

Husband of One wife Literally it reads, *a one-woman man*.

The deacon must not be unfaithful to his wife, either in conduct or in mind. Deacons are to be sexually pure.

Good managers of their children and households.

It means to superintend. To oversee. If he is to be effective in service to the church, he must also be effective in the home. This does not mean the children of deacons must be perfect. In fact it does even mean if a man has a wayward son or daughter that he is disqualified for deacon ministry. The focus is not on the ultimate result but on the focus and commitment of the man. One can be a good manager in his home and still have children who turn away from the faith.

That is an exposition of the text. I've tried to explain the intent of the text. The text means what it was intended to mean. The difficulty sometimes comes when we try not only to interpret the text, but also to apply it to our situation. In a few cases it is just difficult to know exactly what was intended. That is the case with verse 11. In other cases, the specific situation related to a particular church might call for an application that might be different in another culture or time.

With that in mind, our church has adopted a series of statements that not only define how we understand the text but how we apply it. These are based primarily on Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3. These lists are part of our Deacon Ministry Plan adopted by HDBC. You can find this on the HDBC mobile app under the ***Ministries*** button.

Rather than reading the lists to you, I want to clarify where we have made an interpretive decision or applied a principle in a more direct way.

1. Men only. We interpret verse 11 as wives.
2. Committed to our statement of beliefs.
3. Faithful participant in the church. Sundays, Wednesdays, etc.
4. Committed to harmony and unity in the church.
5. Abstaining from alcoholic beverages.

In our particular culture we feel that it is best for our spiritual leaders to abstain, avoiding any potential issues with alcohol, as well guarding our witness in the community.

6. Financial supporter of the work of Christ through the church.
7. Committed to the pastor as the primary leader of the church.
8. Never divorced. This is an application of *one-woman man*.
9. Active member of the church for at least one year.

We acknowledge that nobody meets all of these qualities perfectly. All men fall short in some areas. So, please know that we are not looking for perfect men. If so, we would have no deacons or ministers. We are looking for men who understand the qualities, already have elements of them in their lives, and also seek to cultivate them more fully in their lives.