

Qualifications of a Deacon

Dr. Michael A. Cox

Original: 5-24-87; Revised: 3-24-95; 10-12-03; 11-7-04;
11-2-08; 10-15-17; 3-6-22; 1-18-26

Text: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

1 Timothy: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: Qualifications of Deacons

Central Idea of Message: Those who are to be selected by the church as deacons must already be meeting certain requirements not unlike those of the pastor.

Introduction: After discussing the qualifications of pastors, Paul proceeded to discuss the second of the two particular church offices mentioned in the New Testament: the deacons.

The qualifications for holding the office of deacon are essentially the same as for the pastor, except no teaching capabilities are required on behalf of the deacon.

The deacons are to be spiritually in tune with the Lord and the pastor of the church.

Additionally, the deacons are never referred to as a ruling body, an overseeing body, or a shepherding body, only as a serving body. Herein is an expositional analysis of the qualifications of the deacon as found in the Bible.

I. Definition of a Deacon (v. 8)

A. Διάκονος

1. Noun, which can be either masculine or feminine, used about thirty [30] times in the New Testament
2. Cognates (like διάκονία and διάκονέω) are used about seventy [70] times
3. There is no trace of a definition relating to a legislative function
4. The words are common expressions used of male and female servants

B. Basic meaning

1. **Servant, table waiter, helper, assistant rendering free service**
2. Raises dust by making haste to serve
3. **By definition, deacons are servants, not Senators!**
4. Assistants to the ministers

5. Front-liners in the trenches
6. Peacemakers and peacekeepers (wives too)
7. Not "yes men"
8. Never have their own agenda
9. **Deacon is spelled the same way you spell pastor:
S-E-R-V-A-N-T!**

II. Qualifications of a Deacon (vv. 8-13)

A. The same moral requirements are in tact as for the pastor (v. 8)

1. Grave, dignified, serious, honorable men who have character which inspires respect
 - a) Every adjective, demonstrative pronoun, reflexive pronoun, and participle used to refer to the person in this office is masculine, indicating that those holding the office are to be men
 - b) Men having high principles
 - c) Not to be stubborn or quarrelsome men
2. Not double-tongued, but sincere men of their word who are known for truthfulness
 - a) His "yes" means yes and his "no" means no (James 5:12)
 - b) Not saying one thing and meaning another
 - c) Not saying one thing to one person and something different to another
 - (1) Ministry to the needy would take them from house to house, giving occasion to interact with many people
 - (2) Double-tongues come from double-hearts
 - (3) Flatterers and slanderers are double-tongued
 - (4) No demon-deacons are allowed!
3. Men not addicted to wine
 - a) Wine was probably served as a beverage
 - b) Not to be having an inclination toward wine: addiction, necessity
 - c) Does this make beer acceptable since it is not explicitly named? No!
 - d) What about whiskey, cocaine, pornography, or tobacco? They are not mentioned either but are denounced in principle as well
 - e) Alcohol opens the door to many temptations

- (1) **Any substance use which harms the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, is to be rejected (1 Cor. 6:19-20)**
- (2) **Any substance use which might compromise one's Christian testimony is to be avoided**
- (3) **Any substance use which might embarrass your church should be relinquished**
- (4) Any addiction we have actually has us, and this is precisely what the Bible is preaching against
- (5) Is your body your servant or your master?
- (6) Would you vote to call as your pastor one who was a drinker, dragger, or smoker?
- (7) Baptists have a history of taking a stand against the sale and use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs (Belief Bulletin: Major American Denominations)
- (8) When you have a destructive addiction and are a pastor, deacon, or Sunday school teacher, you are saying it is okay
- (9) Churches need to look for model examples
 - (a) Maintain the highest standards
 - (b) Lowering the standards to fill a position compromises Scripture and sets the church up for embarrassment
- (10) **Deacons must be men who have no addictions which damage their bodies or their Christian testimonies**

4. Men who are not greedy of gain

- a) Not treacherous under a mask of hospitality
- b) Discharging the goods may tempt them to put a little aside for themselves
- c) Not workaholics intent on harvesting material gain

B. **Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience means he is a man of proven spiritual depth (v. 9)**

- 1. Mystery means the eternal purpose of God, once hidden, now revealed in Christ
- 2. Practical love of truth

- 3. Pure, clear conscience
 - a) Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together (Heb. 10:24-25)
 - b) Too many churches have installed Sunday morning Christians as deacons and what they have are Sunday morning deacons: Dot's poem
 - (1) Church Covenant page 3 paragraph 2: "We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations"
 - (a) Deacons should be tithers
 - i) The deacon nominating committee may want to ask about this
 - ii) The question was on our ministerial candidate questionnaires
 - (b) Deacons should be faithful to sustain the worship of the church: the deacon nominating committee does not need to ask about this!
- 4. Deacons must be men who are grounded in the Christian faith and living it consistently and openly with a pure conscience

C. **Already proven in character and ability (v. 10)**

- 1. By the general judgment of other Christians
- 2. Deacons must be men who are free from the faults described above and already meeting all requirements; no trial runs are allowed

D. **Requirements for the wife of a deacon (v. 11)**

- 1. The only verse in the passage addressed to women
- 2. **This is not a verse supporting women as deaconesses: one verse in the midst of five verses addressing males specifically as deacons**
- 3. Not slanderers, she-devils, malicious gossips
- 4. Sober, temperate, calm, not overly emotional women

- 5. **The wife of a deacon is to be faithful in all things, true to the trust given her by her husband**
- 6. The wife can disqualify her husband from being a deacon or a minister
 - a) She can make or break him
 - b) Prov. 12:4: wife can be a crown or a shame
- 7. The wife of the deacon, as well as the wife of a minister, must also be grave and dignified
 - a) Deacon wives probably assisted with female baptismal candidates (Draper 37)
 - b) Deacon wives probably visited females when they were sick (Draper 37)
 - c) Deacon wives probably ministered to the spiritual needs of females (Draper 37)

E. **"Husband of one wife" means monogamous rather than polygamous or bigamous (v. 12)**

- 1. This language prohibits females from serving as deaconesses in the technical, not functional, sense, because women cannot be the husband of one wife
- 2. Not talking about women deacons (deaconesses) because never are these women told to be the wives of one husband (see Acts 6:1-6)
 - a) Holding the position of a deacon is holding a technical office
 - b) General serving, as Martha, the sister of Mary, illustrates the functional sense
 - c) Women should not serve as deaconesses in the technical sense but may serve as deaconesses in the functional sense
- 3. The husband of one wife
 - a) Not the perfect tense (i.e., have had) but the present active imperative (see discussion on pastors in the previous passage)
 - b) Deacons must be men who are devoted to one wife
 - (1) This does not mean they must be married
 - (2) This does not necessarily mean they have not experienced divorce
- 4. Already good household managers: this reiterates the maleness of those holding this office, since Paul and Peter wrote letters stating that the men are the leaders in the home (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:7)
- 5. Quality family life is required

- a) Deacons must be men whose families are exemplary
- b) The husband is seen as the spiritual leader
- c) His children and wife respect and obey him
- d) When one's family life is good, respect of fellow Christians follows
- e) Many a good man has been held back from the deacon ministry because of wayward children or a wayward wife
- f) Deacons must be men who are the spiritual leaders in their families

III. Utilizing the Office of a Deacon (v. 13)

- A. **Men who serve gain confidence: masculine participle**
 - 1. For yourself: distinctively Christian boldness
 - 2. Others gain confidence from you
 - 3. Gain respect: for yourself and from others
- B. **Men who serve gain trust**
 - 1. Positions of trust are not to be abused
 - 2. Maintain these qualities and be confident of God's approval and man's as well
 - 3. Do not simply fill the office, utilize it!

Conclusion: The purpose today is not to make men feel unworthy, although this will happen when the Holy Spirit convicts of shortcomings. **The purpose of this message is to reveal the biblical standard for the deacon and urge the men of the church to live this standard before the watching world.** Every Christian male in the world is expected to meet these qualifications. Every church in the world should demand that these qualifications be met. This church needs committed men of God. Will you be one?

Not outward sphere, but inward heart,
 The love wherewith we do our part:
 Not how large gifts we hold in trust,
 But how far used or left to rust.
 Not how much done, but how well done,
 Faithful to many souls or one.
 Seeking the Master's will to find
 And lean on Him with peace of mind:
 Content to fail in human eyes,
 His smile the one reward and prize.
 In any sphere serve Him alone
 Till cross is left for crown and throne.

A. Naismith