



First Baptist Church Selmer

"ORDER IN THE... CHURCH!" • COMMITTED SERVANTS • 1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16 • 4/14/2024

MAIN POINT

A healthy church has a second level of leadership found in committed servants (deacons) who faithfully serve by ministering to the needs of its members.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How many active deacons do we have at FBC Selmer? Can you name them? (Take a look at Appendix B to see the active, non-active, and Emeritus deacons)

Where all in the church have you seen the deacons serving? In what ways?

What qualities are most important for deacons to display as they serve and minister to the church?

The qualifications demanded of deacons are similar to those required of elders/overseers/pastors. The term "*deacon*" refers literally to 'someone who serves' and is first seen in Scripture in Acts 6. The Bible portrays the deacon as helping the elders/overseers/pastors in the ministries and work of the church.

Although different than pastors especially in the area of preaching/teaching, deacons are actively involved in administration, maintenance, and care of the church membership's physical needs. Interestingly, though, Paul begins this section on deacons without any definition or description of their specific duties.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:8-10.

8 "Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless."
(ESV)

Paul listed several requirements for the position of deacon in these initial verses. The first serves as a cover term for his description of deacon qualifications. The next three requirements are negative in that they prohibit certain attitudes in the deacon.

Which description in verse 8 sticks out to you the most? Why?

What is he specifically warning against in verse 8? What is it about the pursuit of excess that changes a person?

What are some ways a person becomes worthy of respect?

In reference to verse 8 ("*not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain*"), author and theologian, O.S. Guinness stated, "A man drunk on either does not deserve respect." The leadership offices in the church should always remain respectable. Whether a man is consumed with earthly pleasures or greedy for more, the office is and remains one of extremely high standards. All church leaders need the power of a praying church behind them as well as the expectation to be and remain respectable leaders.

What did Paul mean in verse 9 when he said that deacons have the responsibility of "*holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*"?

What is the mystery of the faith?

What does verse 9 entail about the level of importance of a deacon's service?

Look at verse 10. How does our church go about testing people before giving them the responsibility of serving as deacons?

According to these verses, the love for Jesus that deacons have is evidenced by the way they cling to Him. After passing the test of blamelessness, they are well-positioned to model faithfulness to other members of the church.

How important is it that we pray for our deacons to live up to these characteristics?

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:11-13.

11 "Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 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." (ESV)

Who else does Paul mention should commit to living in a respectable way?

Why do you think the characteristics mentioned are somewhat different for the deacon as opposed to his wife?

Although some have argued this particular passage describes the qualifications of deaconesses, translating 'wives' as 'women', it doesn't flow with the context of the overall passage. Verses 8-10 as well as 12-13 speak specifically to the men called as deacons and situated in between is one verse that speaks to the wives of the deacons mentioned.

"Paul is simply telling Timothy that a deacon must have a wife who has respectability that matches his own, that his wife's qualifications are part and parcel of his qualifications for the office of deacon." - George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*

"The character qualifications of deacons in verse 8 and of the parallel qualifications for their wives in verse 11 ensure that they will not only be mutually respectable but will have the same heart for ministry." - Walter Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*

Why do you think the connection between family life and the church is given such prominence?

How can godly service in the church lead to bold witness outside of it?

Paul's appeal for deacons called for visible, mature, righteous living that commended Christianity to its observers. He also wanted deacons to show a maturity that has been proven by obedience and endurance under trials and testing.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

14" I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. 16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." (ESV)

**What does Paul reveal is the entire reason for writing this letter to Timothy?
(v. 15)**

In verse 16, what does Paul state is the mystery of godliness that the church is commissioned to confess?

Paul wants Timothy to use sound teaching to correct the Ephesian church. Simply put, the church is in absolute chaos with teachers teaching unsound doctrine, gender battles facing off in worship services, and a void of godly leadership shepherding the church in which God designed.

But Paul then stops in the middle of the letter pointing Timothy to the big picture. We do these things within the church because the mission of the church is bigger than anything else, to proclaim the goodness of the Gospel: **Jesus came down from His throne in heaven, He lived a perfect life, He died on the cross for our sins, He rose from the grave conquering death, Jesus ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father today, and one day, Jesus will return to call His bride, the church home to glory.**

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

From what you've learned from this passage, what is the relationship between gratitude, respect, and accountability between church members and deacons?

How do these biblical standards for deacons challenge you in your own walk with the Lord?

What role can you play in helping your church affirm deacons and show your appreciation of them?

PRAYER

Spend some time thanking God for the wonderful gift of deacons to the church. Pray that God will continue to raise up godly deacons at this church. Ask God to bless our deacons, protect them from spiritual harm, and grant them the strength to serve our church in the mission God has given.

COMMENTARY

| 1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

3:8 Deacons are the other office of the NT church, in addition to the pastor or elder. Likewise suggests a link between the lists of qualifications. There are striking similarities between the qualifications for elder/overseer/pastor and for deacons. One key distinction is that deacons are not required to be able to teach.

3:9 The word mystery (Gk *mysterion*) is a common Pauline word. It refers to the gospel (1Co 2:7; 4:1; 15:51; Col 1:25-26; 2:2; 4:3; Eph 3:4-13).

3:10 The testing described here would presumably be done by the church under the leadership of the overseers.

3:11 The Greek word behind wives here can mean "women" or "wives." Context (e.g., v. 2) suggests "wives" is the proper translation choice.

3:13 This verse highlights the value and importance of the office of deacon by stating two results of good service in this role. Good standing refers to respect and appreciation from the church toward those who serve the church in this way. Great boldness probably refers to the increase in confidence in the faith that comes from serving and seeing the truths of the gospel proven in ministry.

3:14-16 God's church is a family, so "*household*" might be a better translation. When a sinner believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, he immediately is born again into God's family (John 1:11-13; 1 Peter 1:22-25). Paul advised young Timothy to treat the members of the local church as he would treat members of his own family.

Paul tells Timothy that the church is also "*a pillar and buttress of the truth.*" It is likely that the pillar aspect of the church's ministry relates primarily to displaying the truth of the Word, much as a statue is put on a pedestal so all can see it. As a buttress, the church protects the truth and makes sure it does not fall.

The main truth to which a church should bear witness is the person and work of Jesus Christ. (Warren Wiersbe - *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*)