

The Deacons

(I Tim. 3:8-13)

The word deacon is a transliteration of the Greek word “*Kiakonoa*,” which simply means “*servant*.” It is likely that the origin of the deacons is recorded in Acts chapter 6. The first deacons were appointed to be assistants to the apostles. In a local church today deacons relieve the pastor/elders of other tasks so that they may concentrate on the ministry of the Word, prayer, and spiritual oversight of the church. There is a sense in which every Christian is to be a deacon, meaning “*one who serves*.”

Even though deacons are not given the authority of elders, (or pastors) they still must meet certain qualifications. God’s Word is very clear about this. Over the generations, many faithful deacons have been made elders after they had proved themselves.

QUALIFICATIONS

Grave: (I Tim. 3:8) A deacon should be worthy of respect; a man of Christian character worth imitating. A deacon should take his responsibilities seriously and use the office, not just fill it. It should be his intent to minister to others as under the pastor’s leadership and he should be a serious minded individual who has a burden for others and understands the Word of God and its doctrines. It ought to be his intent to use the office for the glory of God and the blessing of the local church and never for selfish gain.

Not double-tongued: (I Tim. 3:8) He does not gossip or tell tales from house to house. He is very concerned that his words honor the Lord and edify others. He does not say one thing to one person and then the opposite or something else to another person. People can depend upon what he says as he is a truthful person.

Not given to much wine: (I Tim. 3:8) There are differing views about the subject of wine in the Word of God. Here we examine some views:

That the word describes a person who sets long with the cup and thus drinks to excess. The fact that Paul advised Timothy to use wine for medicinal purposes (5:23) indicates that total abstinence was not demanded of believers. Sad to say, some of the members of the Corinthian church got drunk, even at the love feasts that accompanied the Lord’s Supper. (I Cor. 11:21) The Jewish people diluted their wine with water to make sure it was not too strong. It was a well-known fact that water was not pure in those days, so that weak wine taken in moderation would have been healthier to drink than the contaminated water of those days.

Another view is that the word, wine, as used in the Word of God was actually the fruit of the vine and not necessarily intoxicating. Since we are told in Proverbs 23:31-33, “*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women and thine heart shall utter perverse things.*” For Christ to have made intoxicating wine would mean to have broken His own Word here in Proverbs. I think that Timothy would refrain from even drinking grape juice when yet unfermented because others would not know what he was drinking and he did not want to be a reproach or a stumbling block to others.

There is a vast difference between the cultural use of wine in Bible days and supporting the alcohol industry of today. Paul’s admonitions and example in Romans

14:21 would apply today in a special way. A godly pastor and deacon would certainly want to be the best example and not be an excuse for sin in the life of some weaker brother.

Not greedy of filthy lucre: (I Tim. 3:8) Deacons often handle offerings for a church and distribute money to needy people in the Church. It may be tempting to steal or use some of the funds for their own ends or purposes, or to fulfill selfish desires. Finance committees, deacons, or whoever handles money in a church ought to have a biblical attitude toward money. They must be honest people, above reproach.

Doctrinally sound: (I Tim. 3:9) Here is one of the most important of all the requirements for deacons. The word "*mystery*," here means "*truth once hidden but now revealed by God.*" The great doctrines of the faith are hidden to those outside the faith, but they can be understood and need to be understood by those who trust the Lord. Deacons must understand Christian doctrine and obey it with a good conscience.

It is not enough to sit in meetings and decide how to "*run the church.*" They must base their decisions on the Word of God, and they must back up their decisions with godly lives. Far too often church officers know their church constitutions better than they know the Word of God. While it is good to have bylaws and regulations that help maintain order in a church, it is important to manage the affairs of a church on the basis of the Scriptures. **The Bible alone was the constitution of the early church.** A deacon who does not know the Word of God is an obstacle to progress in a local assembly.

A deacon who does not **know** the Word of God cannot help to manage the affairs of the church of God. A deacon who does not **live** the Word of God, but has a "*defiled conscience*" cannot be a good leader and servant in the local church. Simply because a church member is popular, successful in business, or generous in his giving does not mean he is qualified to serve as a deacon.

Tested and proved: (I Tim. 3:10) This implies watching their lives and seeing how they conduct themselves. In most churches, a new member or a new Christian may begin serving the Lord in visitation, ushering, helping in the Sunday School, and numerous other ways. This is the principle in Matthew 25:21; "*Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things.*"

It is interesting to note that Joseph was a servant in Egypt for thirteen years before he became a second ruler in the land. Moses cared for sheep for forty years before God called him. Joshua was Moses' servant before he became Moses' successor. David was tending his father's sheep when Samuel invited him to be anointed king of Israel.

It can be a serious thing to put a person into the position of deacon when he has not proven himself worthy, a godly person, one who fulfills the requirements God's Word has given. *An untested Christian is an unprepared Christian.* He will probably do more harm than good if you give him an office in the church. He may be lifted up with pride and become a major target of Satan's work bringing more problems to the local assembly.

Godly homes: (I Tim. 3:11-12) What we are in our homes is what we really are. The deacon's wife is a part of his ministry, for godliness must begin at home. The deacons must not be men who have been divorced and remarried. God's Word is very clear about this matter. The deacon is to be a husband of one wife. This is not referring to polygamy or having many wives, or having one wife at a time, but it is emphasizing the

necessity of the deacon not having been divorced. Divorce disqualifies a man from being a deacon.

Their wives must be Christian women who are serious (grave) about the ministry, not given to slanderous speech (or a false accuser). She is to be sober and faithful in all things. It is sad to see the damage that is done in a local church when the wives of elders (pastors) or deacons gossip and slander others. She likely will hear things from her husband that she should keep in confidence. She must be a person who is very careful about sharing information that her husband might shared with her.

Willingness to work: (I Tim. 3:13) He is the *use* the office, not just fill it. He ought to be dedicated to use the office to promote the work of the Lord, to bring glory to God, and to be a credit to his church. To use the office is to grow spiritually through his ongoing ministry.

The Greek word translated “*degree*” means “*rank as in an army, a base, a step, or rung on a ladder.*” This ought to be an encouragement to a faithful deacon. God will *promote* him spiritually and give him more and more respect among the saints, which means to give him greater opportunity for ministry. A faithful deacon has a good standing before God and men, and can be used of God to build the church.

Over a period of time some deacons have been prepared through this ministry to become a pastor. It ought to be remember that in the early church pastors were called out from the local church and often they were first faithful deacons. It is a serious matter to serve the local church.

Every man who is a potential deacon ought to search his own heart to be certain that he is qualified by the grace of God.