

Blueprints for a Gospel-Shaped Church – 1 Timothy

Sermon Notes for Message #10: Qualifications for Deacons in the Church (1 Tim. 3:8-13) – Pastor Jeff

- Paul has been laying down the qualifications of leaders in the church. First, the overseeing ruling elders (3:1-7) and now the official servant leaders called Deacons (3:7-13)
- A survey of the New Testament words “*servant*”, “*service*”, and “*serve*” reveal three overarching truths about these words:
 - 1) Every disciple of Christ is a servant whether leaders or not (1 Cor. 3:5)
 - 2) Some disciples of Christ are given the spiritual gift of “*service*” (Rom. 12:7) to minister in supportive, practical ways.
 - 3) Other disciples of Christ should be “*official*” servants (Deacons which are only mentioned three times in the Scripture – Phil 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:7, 10)

❶ There are specific criteria for serving as a deacon (3:8-12)

- God puts a premium on modeling character and the faith in leadership, so Paul lists eight criteria for men and then inserts four criteria for wives of deacons or women who are deaconesses.

The **Personal** qualities:

- “*men of dignity*” = Describes someone who is worthy of respect. They are serious minded and do not treat serious things lightly.
- “*not doubled-tongued*” = They are not insincere or hypocritical saying one thing to one person and then something else to another.
- “*not addicted to wine*” = Describes a person who is committed to full control of his mental and physical capacity and does not allow alcohol to influence or impair his thinking or judgment.
- “*not fond of sordid gain*” = They are not greedy for money. They lead a contented life and do not seek to take advantage of others by pursuing dishonest gain.

The **Spiritual** qualities:

- “*holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*” (v. 9) = A deacon is a man of conviction regarding the central truths and gospel that are now revealed and lives them out in obedience so that His “*conscience*” is “*clear*”
- “*First be tested and if beyond reproach*” (v. 10) = A deacon has proven himself to live a faithful life that is free from any provable accusation in his character or lifestyle.
- “*husband of one wife*” (v. 12a) = Like the elders, he must be a one-womaned man who is morally and faithfully devoted to his wife (if married).. He is pure in thought and deed as he ministers to others.
- “*good manager of his children and their own household*” (v. 12b) = Like the elders, his home is the proving grounds for leading his wife and kids in a manner that is honorable and an example to others.

v. 11: Paul inserts a list of four criteria for “*women*” or “*wives*” right in the middle of his list for the men who are deacons. Much discussion centers around whether Paul is referring to “*women*” who would be deaconesses or “*wives*” of deacons.

- On the side of being “*wives*” is the fact that word is sandwiched between verse 10 and 12 for the qualifications of the men. Why wouldn’t he finish the criteria for men and then move to the criteria for the “*women*” if he is referring to deaconesses.
- On the side of being “*women*” is the fact that Paul didn’t mention any qualifications for elder’s wives, so why have them for deacons wives? He used the word “*likewise*” (parallel to 3:8) which could indicate he is referring to woman deaconesses as the counterparts to male deacons. Some believe Phoebe (Rom. 16:1) was a deaconess since Paul called her “*a servant of the church*”

Their qualifications are:

- “*dignified*” = It is the same word used for the men (3:8), so they need to be honorable and worthy of respect.
- “*not malicious gossips*” = The word Paul uses is the word for the “*devil*”. She cannot attack the reputation of others like the devil with slanderous words that create division.
- “*temperate*” = She is sober-minded and does not live by her emotions, but is in full control of her life mentally, spiritually, sexually, behaviorally staying clear-headed and able to make sound judgments.
- “*faithful in all things*” = She is trustworthy as she assists her husband or follows through on assigned tasks.

② There is a special commendation for serving as a deacon (3:13)

- Paul reveals two rewards for serving as a faithful deacon:
 - 1) “*high standing*” = Those who serve well, receive an elevated respect in God’s sight and by others who see their good and desirable character.
 - 2) “*great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus*” = Those who serve well, get to be like Jesus, get to be used by God to serve His people and get the first-hand assurance that God is being honored when you serve others.

③ There is a Scriptural call for every disciple to serve like a deacon (assorted texts)

- God puts a premium on service as His disciples. If you follow Christ, you will serve Him (John 12:26) and this service is a gift of His grace (Eph. 3:7). Jesus adds that greatness in His kingdom comes by “*learning to be the servant of all*” (Mark 9:35)
- The Lord mandates our service (Gal 5:13) and He models it (Phil 2:7-8; Mark 10:45; Lk 22:27; John 13:14-17)
- God included you in His plan of service (Eph. 4:16), He indebted you to His family “*as stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (1 Pet. 4:10) in giving you a spiritual gift (1 Pet. 4:10), He integrated you into His one body to serve others, and He incentivized you to glorify Him through your service and use His grace to do so (1 Cor. 15:10)