

THE DEACON



***Qualifications for the man or woman who is to serve as a
Deacon or Deaconess
and what his/her duties are.***

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THE “DEACON”
THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE OFFICE
THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE
THE MEN AND WOMEN TO FILL THE OFFICE
(Note: The study on Elders should be studied before this study)

PART ONE
THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE OFFICE

The Biblical basis for the office of Deacon is found in 1 Timothy where he lists the qualifications.

Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. **Women** must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. **Deacons must be husbands of only one wife**, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NASB)

This passage begins with “Deacons likewise . . .” Like what? Like Elders. Paul is defining the office of Deacon as he did the office of Elder. There is one important question to be settled before we begin on the qualifications. The NASB, like most translations have “Women . . .” The problem here is that both the Hebrew and Greek languages, for some reason, do not have a word for “wife.” A man’s “woman” is his wife” and vice-versa. So, we must settle the question of whether or not Paul is referring to the wives of Deacons or to Women Deacons (Deaconesses).

The strongest argument for this referring to women Deacons is the fact that Paul nowhere describes the characteristics of an Elder’s wife which would be more important. The only other argument put forth for women Deacons is in Romans.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant¹ of the church which is at Cenchrea;
Romans 16:1 (NASB)

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,
Romans 16:1 (NKJV)

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant¹ of the church in Cenchrea. Romans 16:1 (NIV)

Now, I recommend to you, Phoebe, our sister, who is a deaconess of the assembly which is at Cenchrea,

Romans 16:1 (WuestNT)

One might argue that the seven original deacons were all men.

¹The NASB and NIV have “Deaconess” as footnotes

"Therefore, brethren, select from among you **seven men** of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

Acts 6:3 (NASB)

I do not believe anyone can issue a definitive statement about women deacons until we go to be with our Father in heaven. Since the work of the first deacons was to care for the widows, it seems that a woman deacon could do that as well, if not better than, a male deacon. So, we shall leave it at that.

Deacons likewise . . . here it would appear that Paul is saying that the Deacon has to have the same qualifications as the Elder, but that is not the case. "Likewise, there are qualifications for Deacons." I think the likewise would suggest we compare the two (I shall omit those qualification in Titus.)

ELDERS

- above reproach
- the husband of one wife
- temperate
- prudent
- respectable
- hospitable
- able to teach
- not addicted to wine
- not pugnacious
- gentle
- peaceable
- free from the love of money
- He must be one who manages his own household well
- not a new convert
- have a good reputation with those outside the church

DEACONS

- men of dignity
- not double-tongued
- not addicted to much wine
- not fond of sordid gain
- with a clear conscience
- beyond reproach

DEACONESSES

- Women must likewise be dignified
- not malicious gossips
- temperate
- faithful in all things

DEACONS & DEACONESSES

- Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.

While the qualifications for Deacons sound like some of those for Elders, it is interesting to note that few are the same in the Greek text. Both the Elder and the Male Deacon must be "one women men." A female deacon, one would assume, should be a "one man woman." Both Elders and deacons (and deaconesses) are to rule their own homes well.

The first qualification for Deacon has no counterpart in the Elder.

from sébomai <G4576>, to worship, venerate. Venerable, reverend, reputable, dignified. Semnós represents not only earthly dignity (kósmios <G2887>), but that which is derived from a higher citizenship, a heavenly one, which is the possession of all believers. There lies something of majestic and awe-inspiring qualities in semnós which does not repel but rather invites and attracts (Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2)

The Complete Word Study Dictionary

Notice that the word is not used in verses 1-7, the Elder's qualifications. The Deacon is to be an "attractive" person (male or female). Not "attractive" in the Hollywood sense, but in the sense that

people are drawn to him or her. They are “nice” people. In order to do the work of a deacon, this is essential. How could they be of help to others if others didn’t want to be around this deacon?

The first item listed for the “women” is the same as for the men (see above insert).

Next is “not double-tongued.”

dílogon, adj. from dís <G1364>, twice, and légō <G3004>, to speak. Double-tongued, two-faced, deceitful in one's words

The Complete Word Study Dictionary

In other words, he or she should not say one thing to one person and something different to another. They need to be consistent in their talk as well as in their walk.

As for the women, not malicious gossips, is also similar to what is given for the man.

from diabállō <G1225>, to accuse. A false accuser, used for the devil. (I) One who falsely accuses and divides people without any reason. He is an accuser, a slanderer

The Complete Word Study Dictionary

If you can pronounce the Greek word, you will find it the source of our word Devil.

Thirdly, the deacon is not to be addicted to much wine. While the Greek construction here is different than that for the Elder, the basic sense is the same - not a drunkard.

The third thing listed for the woman is “temperate.”

nēpháleos; fem. nēphalía, neut. nēphálion, adj. from néphō <G3525>, to be sober. Sober, temperate, self-controlled, **especially in respect to wine**. Used metaphorically, meaning sober-minded, watchful, circumspect (1 Tim. 3:2, —Complete Word Study Dictionary, The

Note that this is temperance with respect to wine. Paul uses the same term for this in his qualifications for Elders in Titus 1.

There is one other qualification for the Deaconess, *faithful in all things*

peíthō <G3982>, to win over, persuade. Worthy of belief, trust, or confidence.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary

This leaves us with three final qualifications for a Deacon.

not fond of sordid gain

aischrós <G150>, indecent, dishonorable, and kérdos <G2771>, gain. A person who is eager to gain even if such gain degrades his moral character. Occurs only in 1 Tim. 3:3 (TR), 8; Titus 1:7. A bishop, elder, or deacon must not go after gain that would dishonor his character.

This concept was pretty well covered in the qualifications for Elder. Is it not strange where money seems to enter into everyone's character?

with a clear conscience. This is two words in the Greek. The first is *katharón*, *adj. Clean, pure, clear, in a natural sense unsoiled.* It is the word we get catharsis from (I assume you know what that is - or did you get through childhood without it?). The second word is

suneídō <G4894>, to be conscious of. Conscience, to be one's own witness, one's own conscience coming forward as witness. It denotes an abiding consciousness whose nature it is to bear inner witness to one's own conduct in a moral sense

When you add these all together, you end up with the last in the list, beyond reproach

anégklēton, *adj. from the priv. a <G1>, without, and egkaléō <G1458>, to accuse in court. Not merely unaccusable but unaccused, free from any legal charge.*

We discussed this concept in the qualifications for Elder. Now, to sum it up, there is one very significant difference in what Paul says about the Elder and the Deacon.

For those who have served well as deacons **obtain for themselves** a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Serving as a Deacon has its rewards. It gives a man (or woman) some notice among the church officers and members. For the Elder, Paul wrote, ***if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.*** The NIV has he desires **a noble task.**

We might summarize these qualifications as follows. The qualifications for the Deacon (or Deaconess) are generally the same as for Elder but with a little less stress. A person does not have to have quite as high standard to be Deacon as to be and Elder.

Paul wrote to Titus,

holding fast the faithful word which **is in accordance with the teaching**, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Titus 1:9 (NASB)

To Timothy Paul wrote,

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**,

1 Timothy 3:2 (NASB)

The Elder differs from the Deacon primarily in respect to teaching and doctrine. In fact,

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 6:2-4 (NASB)

Teaching was the significant factor. An Elder has to have a clear standing of the Scriptures and be able to teach them to others. This is the way Paul instructed Timothy.

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NASB)

The Elder must oversee the Spiritual welfare of the church and act as teachers and preachers and evangelists. The Deacon is to aid in the work by taking care of the more material matters so that the Elders will not be deprived of their time to study and to teach,

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3:13 (KJV)

This is amply demonstrated by two of the first seven deacons. Luke used sixty verses in Acts 7 to tell of the martyrdom of Stephen! Probably the longest chapter in Acts. Then there was Phillip who led the Ethiopian Eunuch to the Lord and went where the Lord led him - Acts 8:26-40. Certainly these two demonstrated what Paul wrote, they **purchased to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.**