

Qualifications for Deacons

1 Timothy 3:8-13

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Pastor Gary Hollinger

Although the responsibilities for deacons are different than that of elder/overseers, the qualifications are no less stringent.

I. Biblically, deacons are tasked with ministering to physical needs, while elders/overseers are responsible for spiritual health.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly... (Acts 6:1-7b)

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons... (Philippians 1:1)

II. Like elders and overseers, deacons are to be men who are deserving to be emulated. (v. 8a)

Gr. Semnos (4x): august, venerable, reverend
Dignified, men of dignity, respectable, grave (KJV), serious

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

honorable, noble, admirable, honest (KJV)

III. Deacons' words must be consistent. (v. 8b)

not Gr. Dilogos (dil'-og-os): two worded, saying one thing with one person another with another (with the intent to deceive)

double-tongued (KJV, NAS), two-faced (NET), double-talkers, hypocritical

IV. Deacons must also be committed to the Faith. (v. 9)

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Titus 1:9)

...able to teach... (1 Timothy 3:2g)

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:25-27)

Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. (Acts 6:3)

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God’s grace. (2 Corinthians 1:12)

V. Other mature leaders must have time to observe the life, character and ministry of the potential deacon before they are promoted to office. (v. 10)

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

For the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God’s work... (Titus 1:7a)

Gr. anegkletos (an-eng'-klay-tos) 5x
that cannot be called into to account, unproveable, unaccused,
beyond reproach (NAS)

Expositors: anegkletos has three stages: 1) Testing 2) Prove by testing 3) Approve as a result of testing

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ (Matthew 25:21)

VI. Deaconesses (or possibly deacon’s wives) are held to the same high standard. (v. 11a)

Women *must* likewise *be* dignified (NAS)

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

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow-worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith... (1 Thessalonians 3:2)

Therefore it is not surprising [the devil's] servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will correspond to their actions. (2 Corinthians 11:15)

A. Deaconesses must not speak ill of others or be gossips. (11b)

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret. (Proverbs 11:13)

A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends. (Proverbs 16:28)

B. Deaconesses must be of high moral character. (v. 11c)

Level or clear-headed, sober, separated from wine

VII. Deacons have the same marital/sexual and parenting criteria as elders and overseers.

(v. 12)

VIII. The result of faithful service is the respect of God's people, the pleasure of God and confidence in one's faith.

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:24-30)

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-9-10)