

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday January 18, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
“Are You a Deacon?”
1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6

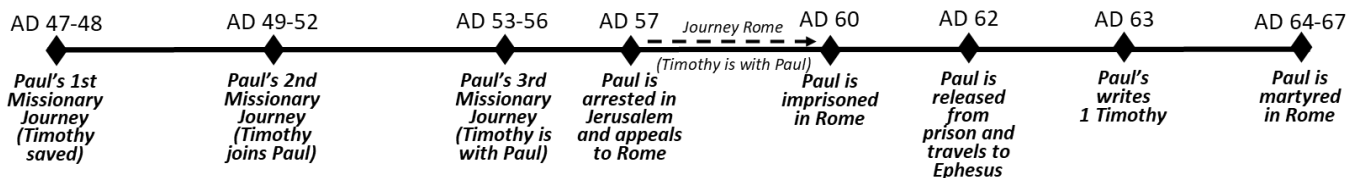
“⁸ Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. ¹¹ Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” -1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NKJV)



Key Reminders for 1 Timothy:

- (1) **1 Timothy is a personal letter** – It is unlike most of Paul’s other letters that appear in the New Testament. Remember that most of Paul’s letters were written to churches and/or groups of churches, like Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians (a circular letter), etc. 1 Timothy was not a letter written to a group of Christians (churches). It is written to an individual and should be read and studied with that in mind. It’s personal in nature, rather than corporate. That doesn’t mean it’s not for the church today or applicable for the church and Christians. It is! It just means that in studying and understanding the letter for context purposes this must be kept in mind. It does have a bearing on interpretation of Paul’s letter.
- (2) **1 Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry** – As already - else’s mail, or better said we are privileged by design to get to read someone else’s mail. God wants us to for a reason. He wants us to apply the truths Paul spoke to Timothy to our own lives. Remember that the name Timothy means “one who honors God,” likewise our lives ought to honor God by how we conduct our lives, how we relate to believers in the church, how we serve and lead in the church, our behaviour, our spirit and attitudes, our words, our victory over the very things that defeat us and may keep us from being all that God has called us to be in Christ. Remember that Timothy was a young teenager from the town of Lysta when Paul first met him on his first missionary journey through Asia Minor. Paul led Timothy to the Lord, as well as the rest of his family... his mother and grandmother. When Paul returned to the area on his second missionary journey, apparently Timothy has grown in his faith to the point that Paul asked him to join him on his missionary journey. Timothy would remain a ministry companion to Paul for the rest of Paul’s life, as a faithful servant and fellow ministry.
- (3) **1 Timothy is known as a “Pastoral Epistle” (or letter)** – That makes this personal letter instructional especially for a pastor. There are three “Pastoral Epistles” in all in the New Testament; 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, all written by Paul. They are “pastoral” in nature. In its simplest form, “pastoral” means pertaining to the pastor and or his responsibilities. The most common definitions of “pastoral” would be 1. Pastoral - of or pertaining to shepherds; hence, relating to rural life and scenes; as in a pastoral life (remember that pastors are often referred to the shepherd of the flock caring for their needs especially spiritual), 2. Pastoral – relating to the care of souls, or to the pastor of a church, as in, pastoral duties or a pastoral letter, 3. Pastoral – used to refer to the part of the work of teachers, preachers (pastors) and priests that involves giving help and advice about personal matters, or giving pastoral care through teaching, sermons, homilies, etc. The Pastoral Epistles are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. All three are letters from an old man at the close of his ministry who is concerned for his successors in the pastorate. As such, the letters concern the things that would be crucial for the young pastors to understand—church organization and discipline, including such matters as the appointment of elders and deacons, the opposition of rebellious members or false teachers, and the maintenance of doctrinal purity.

- (4) **1 Timothy was written to address problems in the church at Ephesus and encourage their pastor, Timothy** – Timothy would eventually become the pastor of the church at Ephesus, likely around AD 62, following Paul’s release from prison. Paul’s release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3)... a troubled church with problems (Revelation 2:4, “... *you have left your first love.*”). Timothy find’s himself... perhaps at a young age, pastoring a very strategic, yet troubled church with a lot of problems.
- (5) **1 Timothy was likely written about AD 63** - The Bible’s silence on the ultimate fate of Paul has generated a great deal of debate in modern times. The book of Acts ends with Paul sitting in a Roman prison awaiting his hearing before the Roman emperor, a privilege of appeal that all Roman citizens like Paul possessed. However, the writing of the Pastoral Epistles clearly dates to a time after the events of Acts. So where was Paul when he wrote 1 Timothy? Paul had expected the Romans to release him from prison, something that likely happened near the end of AD 62 (Philippians 2:24). As previously stated, his release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul then went on to preach in Macedonia, where he heard reports of Timothy’s work at Ephesus that prompted him to write 1 Timothy, probably in AD 63.



First Timothy presents the most explicit and complete instructions for church leadership and organization in the entire Bible. This includes sections on appropriate conduct in worship gatherings, the qualifications of elders and deacons, and the proper order of church discipline. Paul advised Timothy on these practical matters in a way that would have helped the young pastor to emphasize the purity that should characterize Christian leaders and the gatherings they oversee.

“⁸ Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. ¹¹ Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” -1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NKJV)

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” ⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.” -Acts 6:1-6 (NKJV)

I shared this article with you last time from “Christianity Today,” who recently ran an article asking the question, “What is wrong with the church today.” I think may be asking that question from a lot of different perspectives. ***In your opinion what is wrong with the church today? Or is there anything wrong with church today?***

Here were the top 4 major responses to that question in Christianity Today, “What is wrong with the church today?”

Top 4 Responses to the Question, “What is Wrong with the Church Today?”:
(according to Christianity Today)

- (1) The church today is compromised**
- (2) The modern church is more about entertainment**
- (3) The contemporary church is more about personalities than about Jesus**
- (4) Today’s preachers just say what people want to hear**

Notice in these responses to what is wrong with the church that at least 2 of these have to do with church leaders, who is leading the church, those seemingly in charge. They speak of “personalities” (which probably implies those who in charge, charismatic leaders/preachers, personalities... churches often take on the “personality” of the preacher), and “preachers.” Now we might recognize in those responses the concern about not compromising the Word of God, and the need to be focused on the main thing (God’s Word, and Jesus Christ). I think even in these this may reflect on the leadership in the church today.

Bible teacher, **Alex Strauch**, who has written extensively on church leadership, and especially on the role of pastor, elders and deacons says, **“The leadership vacuum is a dangerous trend in today’s churches.”**

- ***Do you agree or disagree with this statement?***
- ***What do you think is meant by “a leadership vacuum” in the church? Is it simply that there is a shortage of those going into the ministry and a shortage of pastors today because people don’t want the job? Or is it a vacuum because of poor/ineffective***

pastors/preachers/church leaders who are leading in the wrong way or an unbiblical/unscriptural way?

- *What do you believe may be behind the leadership vacuum we have today? Or why do you believe we have a leadership vacuum?*
- *What do you believe might help*

These are good questions that I believe are important for the church and Christians to address... folks this is a reality for the church today, and an important topic for us to consider.

An Episcopal Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has a hand-lettered sign over the only door into the sanctuary that reads, **“Servants’ Entrance.”** You can’t enter or leave that church except through the “servants’ door” (*Christianity Today* [9/16/91], p. 42). That sign states an important truth: If you know Christ as Savior, you’re His servant. It’s not optional; it’s mandatory.

And He set the example that we should do as He did... Christ came as servant to show us how to serve one another (and others).

Some passage that show us Christ as our Example of Authentic Servanthood:

- (1) **John 13:12-17** – *“¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”*
- (2) **Mark 9:33-37** – *“³³ Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. ³⁵ And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶ Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”*
- (3) **Philippians 2:5-8** – *“⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*

How we serve Christ will vary according to the spiritual gifts that He has given us and the opportunities that come our way. But every Christian should have the mindset, **"I am a servant (or a slave) of Jesus Christ."** There's a difference between those terms, and yet Jesus used them interchangeably when He told His disciples (Mark 10:42-45)...

READ: Mark 10:35-45 - Greatness Is Serving

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." ³⁶ And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³⁷ They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" ³⁹ They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. ⁴² But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

After innumerable generations of sinners, a virgin named Mary miraculously conceived and gave birth to a unique individual – Jesus Christ. He was entirely without sin, thus, completely unselfish... selfless in fact He came as a servant. He gathered around Himself twelve sinners whom He chose to personally disciple. Two of these followers, James and John, were brothers and former fishermen.

3 Contrasts of Authentic Servanthood:

- 1. Authentic servanthood has no agenda but serving Jesus/God... a lack of a servant's heart will often demand its own way (its own agenda) -** One day James and John came to Jesus in all of their self-centeredness and made a request of Him, found in **Mark 10:37**, **"They (James and John) replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.'"** Jesus first told them that they did not know what they were asking (v.38a). They came with a "selfish agenda." Give us a place of prominence and authority over others. Make us look good and more important than all the others. We want success, power, prestige, prominence. Does our service ever require prominence? Yes, we want to be noticed, patted on the back, given prominence because we serve. Lord, make me important because I serve. John the Baptist said of Jesus, **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** (John 3:30) (NIV "He must become greater; I must become less.")
- What happens in a church when individuals are "agenda" driven?

What happens in a church when individuals have their eyes on themselves rather than on God?

2. **Authentic servanthood has an accurate perspective and vision of God and who He is... *a lack of a true servant's heart will usually come with a faulty self-perception* – Selfishness and self-centeredness always has a skewed vision because its motive is based on self and what will promote self. Genuine servanthood operates with no motive but His with the understanding that it's all about Him. Jesus directly answered the request of James and John by saying in **verse 40**, *“But to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”* In other words, “Guys, you aren’t seeing clearly here! God owes us nothing and what He does in His Kingdom is His Sovereign business not ours. Servants serve with God in mind... the one they are serving.**
3. **Authentic servanthood creates unity and harmony... *a lack of a true servant's heart will most often cause disharmony and division* – Selfishness and self-centeredness and looking out for our own self-interest will almost always create division and disharmony... jealousy and envy follow. It has at its core the creation of such, because self wants to be exalted above others. Genuine... authentic servanthood should open the doors of service to others not close them. When the other disciples heard this dialogue between Jesus and James and John it created a divisive problem **verse 41** says they *“became indignant with James and John”***

So Jesus called the twelve disciples to come closer to Him, and he began to give them some illuminating counsel on authentic servanthood. Listen close to his instruction in **Mark 10:42-45**, *“Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be first must be slave (bond servant) of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for man.’”* The world system works through intimidation, abusive power, and self-centered drive. But God people are not to operate this way. They are to live the lives of servants, sacrificing themselves and their possessions for others just as Christ, the Son of God who became the son of Man, did. The Apostle summarized this timeless teaching well when he wrote in **Philippians 2:3-4**, *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

Serving Christ is not volunteering, where you give a few hours now and then to help out. It's a 24-7 calling. Whatever you're doing or wherever you're at, you're a servant of the Lord who rescued you from eternal judgment. He saved you to serve Him always.

But in the structure of the local church, some are called to be “official servants,” or “deacons.” “Deacon” is a transliteration of a Greek word meaning, “servant.” In more than 100 New Testament uses of that word in its various forms, almost all refer either to Christ or to His followers. Only a few refer to the office of deacon in the church (J. Stam, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* [Zondervan], ed. by Merrill C. Tenney, 2:48-

49). So in our study of the church, we need to understand the role of all Christians as servants, but also what it means to be an official servant, or deacon.

Application Questions

1. How can we promote a servant mentality in the church instead of “here I am, serve me”?
2. What is the difference between being a volunteer in the church versus being a servant?
Why is this distinction important?
3. How can a Christian discover his or her spiritual gift(s)? Is this helpful? How?
4. Should we be motivated by rewards? How so?

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE SERVANTS OF CHRIST

All Christians are servants of Christ; some should be “official servants.” There are no exceptions. If a person is a follower of Jesus Christ, he or she is Christ’s servant. That’s so because ...

3 Reasons Christians are to be Servants of Christ:

(1) **Christ is our supreme example of servanthood** - As we just saw (Mark 10:45), Jesus said, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* It’s amazing that when God took on human flesh and came to this earth, He came as He did!

- God could have chosen for His Son to be born in Herod’s palace, where He would have had the best of every worldly comfort.
- Instead He chose a poor carpenter and his wife!
- The Son of God grew up in a modest home where He learned the trade of His earthly father.
- His hands were not the soft hands of royalty, but the rough, callused hands of a carpenter.
- It took the disciples a while to understand that Jesus the Messiah did not come at first to conquer all His enemies and establish His throne, with each of them sharing His power and glory.
- So throughout the Gospels, we see them jockeying for power.
- James and John (in the passage we read a minute ago) used their mother to ask Jesus that in His kingdom they might sit one on His right hand and one on His left.
- This caused the other disciples to grow indignant (Matt. 20:20, 24).
- Even at the Last Supper, as Jesus was burdened about His approaching death, the disciples were still arguing about which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:23-24).
- We don’t know whether the argument erupted before or after Jesus took the basin and washed their feet (probably before), but Jesus repeated the lesson about the greatest being the servant and then added (Luke 22:27), *“For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”*

- You would think that after Jesus comes in His glory and everyone is subject to His rule, He would shed the servant's role and demand that everyone serve Him.
- But when Jesus comes again, He says that He will have His followers recline at the table and He will wait on them (Luke 12:37)!
- So throughout eternity, Jesus is our supreme example of servanthood!

So with that given...

(2) **Christlikeness means being a servant** - After washing the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, Jesus said (John 13:14-17), *"If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."*

- We all know that Christlikeness means being a servant, but the question is, do you and I do it? Do you wash dirty feet? Do you do the unpleasant servant jobs?
- The word "servant" originally referred to those who served tables (John 2:5, 9; Acts 6:2).
- In that culture, such lowly tasks were thought to be undignified (Evangelical Dictionary of Theology [Baker], ed. by Walter Elwell, p. 296; Theological Dictionary of the New Testament [Eerdmans], ed. by Gerhard Kittel, 2:83).
- But Jesus set the counter-cultural example and calls us to follow Him.
- It's important that you serve the Lord for the right motives.
 - Sometimes people serve because they like the praise that they get for doing it.
 - Or, it makes them feel important or even superior to meet others' needs.
 - But the right reason to serve is to please the Lord who saved you when you were His enemy and deserved His judgment.
- ➔ • A businessman once asked **Lorne Sanny**, President of the Navigators, how he could know when he had a servant attitude. Sanny replied, *"By how you act when you are treated like one."*
- If you know Christ and you want to be like Him, you have to serve Him by serving others.

(3) **The Holy Spirit has gifted believers to serve** –

- Paul mentions the spiritual gift of *"helps"* (1 Cor. 12:28) or *"service"* (Rom. 12:7).
- Peter says that we are to use whatever gifts we have *"in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (1 Pet. 4:10).
- While all Christians must serve in various ways, God specially gifts some for service in supportive, practical, and often behind-the-scenes ways.
- Those with the gift of service are like the linemen on a football team. They don't usually share the limelight with the quarterback, or the running back who scores touchdowns, or the receivers who catch spectacular passes and make stunning runs

to the endzone, but without their hard work, the quarterback couldn't begin to do his job.

- But whether service is your gift or not, all Christians are the Lord's servants.
- That means helping with jobs that need to be done.
 - Do you see trash on the floor at church? Pick it up and throw it away.
 - Does the trash can need to be emptied? Carry it to the dumpster and put in a clean bag.
 - Did someone dirty the rest room sink? Grab a paper towel and wipe it clean.
 - Are they shorthanded at cleaning up after a church social? Pitch in and help.
 - At home, does your wife need help? Get up and help her!

But beyond the service that we all are to render ...

SOME CHRISTIANS SHOULD SERVE IN AN OFFICIAL/LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

As the New Testament church developed, the service and helps position in the church of "deacon" (= "servant") became official. Note four things...

4 Important Things About the Office of Deacon:

(1) The office of deacon is recognized in Scripture - Most scholars agree that the office of "deacon" finds its roots in Acts 6:1-6. The church in Jerusalem had grown considerably. Apparently, many who had visited Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost and were converted stayed on to grow in their new faith in Christ. This created many material needs and led to the temporary arrangement of pooling resources to meet the needs (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). Many widows in the church without sufficient income were served daily meals. But a problem arose when the Greek-speaking Jews felt that their widows were being neglected in favor of the native Hebrews. The apostles didn't want to get distracted from the preaching and teaching of the Word in dealing with the situation, so they told the church to select seven faithful men whom they could put in charge of the task. We don't know why they stipulated *seven* men. Perhaps they decided that seven men could take care of the job. Although the word "deacon" is not used in Acts 6, it is usually agreed that these seven were the prototype deacons. They were officially recognized and ordained for the job (Acts 6:6). They assisted the apostles by serving in the practical matter of distributing the food fairly so that the apostles could focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). *By the way, being a deacon can get you killed... one of the first New Testament deacons, Stephen, was martyred for his faith (killed by stoning)*

Later, when Paul wrote to the Philippian church, he addressed his letter to the overseers and deacons (Phil. 1:1). He probably mentioned the deacons because of their help with the financial gift that the church had sent to Paul. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul also mentions the offices of elders and deacons. In his letter to Titus, he mentions elders, but not deacons, perhaps indicating that the office of deacon is not mandatory for every church, but rather

should emerge as the need arises. As a church grows, the elders will need help with administration and other matters so that they can concentrate on shepherding the flock. At that point, deacons can be officially recognized. So, how do we choose deacons?

(2) **The qualifications for deacons are spelled out in Scripture... *that they must be above reproach in their character and their home life*** - We sometimes get the erroneous notion that the qualifications for deacons are not as high as those for elders. But in Acts 6:3, the men had to be “of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.” Except for being able to teach, the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3 are comparable to those for elders. They must be spiritually mature men and women.

1. ***Male deacons must be above reproach in their character and in their home life*** - In 1 Timothy 3, Paul lists six *character qualifications*...

6 Character Qualifications of a Deacon: A deacon must be...

[1] ***A man of dignity*** - The word is the opposite of being a goof-off. A deacon should have a seriousness of purpose about him, so that those he serves sense that he is concerned for them, so that they trust and respect him.

[2] ***Not double-tongued*** - He cannot tell one person one thing, but another person the opposite in an attempt to please everyone. Since the deacon was involved in handling church finances, he had to be a man of his word.

[3] ***Not addicted to much wine*** - Since wine was commonly served as a gesture of hospitality, it was important for a deacon, making his rounds from house to house, to exercise control or else he could become a drunkard.

[4] ***Not fond of sordid gain*** - The ESV translates, “not greedy for dishonest gain.” This is also a qualification for elders (Titus 1:7). Since a deacon’s duties often involved the distribution of money and gifts to the needy, there was always the temptation for embezzlement. A deacon could not be a man who would pursue dishonest gain.

[5] ***Hold to the mystery of the faith (with a clear conscience)*** - The NIV’s “deep truths of the faith” is misleading. The “mystery of the faith” is Paul’s term for Christian truth, especially the gospel. Mystery refers to that which once was hidden, but now has been revealed in Christ. A deacon must be a man of conviction regarding the central truths of the Christian faith. Paul’s reference to “a clear conscience” probably is in contrast to the false teachers in Ephesus, who had not kept a good conscience and thus had suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith (1 Tim. 1:19).

[6] ***Tested and found above reproach*** - “Above reproach” is used in Titus 1:6, 7 as a qualification for elders (the Greek word in 1 Tim. 3:2 is a close synonym). It means, literally, “not called to account.” No legitimate charges could be brought against him. This is to be determined by “testing,” which does not refer to a period of probation after he becomes a deacon. Rather, it means that a man has an observed track record before he is put into office. You don’t put a man into office and then test him to see if he’s trustworthy. Test him first and then recognize him. **this is like saying, “Here is the 7,000 page bill, just vote for it! You can find out what it says later!”*

Then Paul lists two ways male deacons must be above reproach in their *home life*. First, (1 Tim. 3:12): “Deacons must be husbands of *only* one wife ...” This is the same as the requirement for elders, literally, “a one-woman man” (1 Tim. 3:2; I don’t know why the NASB translators added “only” here). As we saw in the case of elders, the term refers to a man of moral purity. A deacon often ministers to widows and single women, and so it’s especially important for him to be a man who is pure in thought and deed. Second (1 Tim. 3:12): “Deacons must be ... good managers of their children and their own households.” This is also the same as the requirement for elders (1 Tim. 3:4). The principle is the same: if a man can’t manage matters in his home, don’t promote him to manage matters in the church.

2. ***Female deacons must be godly and faithful in all things*** - In the middle of his discussion about deacons, Paul inserts a verse about “women” (1 Tim.3:11), “¹¹ Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.” (NKJV)

ESV = “The wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.”

HCSB = “Wives, too, must be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything.” (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

NASB = “Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.”

NIV = “In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.”

NLT = “In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.”

Then he returns to his discussion about deacons. The question is, what/who is Paul does this refer to here. There are two views...

- (1) **FIRST VIEW:** It refers to deacons’ wives - to deacons’ wives (NIV, ESV, HCSB)
 (2) **SECOND VIEW:** It refers to women deacons - or to women deacons (or deaconesses)? In favor of the view that he is referring to the wives of deacons is the fact that the reference is sandwiched between the qualifications for deacon. It would seem that he would finish with one group before moving on to the next. But against that view is the fact that Paul doesn’t mention any qualifications for elders’ wives. Why would he do this only for deacons’ wives? In favor of the view that Paul is referring to women deacons is the word “**likewise**” (parallel to 1 Tim. 3:8, pointing to a third group after elders and deacons). Also, in Romans 16:1, Phoebe is called a deacon (“servant”) of the church. Women deacons could have been married to men deacons, or to elders or to any men, assuming that they had time

to serve. Or they could have been widows or single women devoted to serving the Lord (1 Tim. 5:3-16). They probably assisted the deacons in their duties, especially in ministering to women in the church (Titus 2:2-5).

Paul mentions four qualifications:

4 Qualification for Deacon's Wives or Deaconesses:

- (1) ***They must be dignified*** - This is the same word used for male deacons (1 Tim. 3:8). They couldn't be goof-offs.
- (2) ***They cannot be gossips*** - If they went from house to house with juicy tidbits of private information, they could quickly ruin a church. They must be able to control their tongues.
- (3) ***They must be temperate (the same as for elders in 1 Tim. 3:2)*** - The word means, able to make sound judgments. It refers to someone who does not live by emotions, but by obedience to God's Word. If a woman is swayed by her emotions, she will not be able to point needy women to God's truth, which is the only source of true healing for their problems. A woman needs to be able to discern truth from error if she is to serve effectively.
- (4) ***They must be "faithful in all things"*** - They must follow through on assigned tasks. If an elder knows of a family that needs care of some kind, and assigns it to a deaconess, he needs to be able to trust her to follow through. What do deacons do in the church?

- (3) **The job of deacons is to serve/assist the pastor/elder and the church in practical needs** - Paul never specifically mentions what deacons were supposed to do. But assuming that the seven men in Acts 6 were prototype deacons, we can see some ways that they served. Their main job was to free up the apostles from administering the distribution of food to the Hellenistic widows so that the apostles could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. So a main function of deacons is to take care of administrative or other tasks to free up the elders for prayer, teaching, and shepherding the flock. A second task of the deacons in Acts 6 was to care for the physical needs of the poor and needy in the church. Probably they assessed whether the needs were legitimate or not. They made sure that the help given was equitable. Currently at FCF, we have deacons of women's ministries, youth, missions, outreach, technology, and facilities. Our deacons also serve with our elders on the nominating committee when we need to call a new pastor. There are others who serve in various ways who probably should be recognized officially as deacons. And there are plenty of other ministry needs that could use help. So if the Lord is putting it on your heart to serve, talk to one of the elders. We want to see each person serving the Lord in line with his or her spiritual gifts, whether unofficially or officially as deacons. ***NOTE: I believe that the deacon is to take some of the pressure off the pastor in ministry so that he may devote himself to the preaching and teaching of God's Word. This doesn't not negate the "pastoral ministry"***

of the pastor, but it support and assists in that area so that he is not overwhelmed. If a deacon body has become a decision making board or council in the church, this is a misrepresentation of the Biblical picture of the deacon. This does not mean that the servant deacon will not be a part of the pastoral ministry of the church and give clear support and undergirding by their authority as a deacon to support the pastor and church.

- (4) **The reward for deacons is a high standing and great confidence in the faith** - After listing the qualifications for those who serve in an official capacity, Paul lists the rewards (1 Tim. 3:13), *“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.”* *“A high standing”* probably refers to respect in the church along with good standing in God’s sight. Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a servant, and God highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:5-11). The Lord promised that all who serve Him will be rewarded, both in this life and in eternity (Matt. 10:42; 19:27-30). He said (Matt. 23:12), *“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”* The Lord will reward the person who humbles himself and serves faithfully as a deacon. Even if the church doesn’t notice, God does. *“Great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus”* could refer both to confidence before God and before people. A faithful servant can go boldly before the Lord in prayer, knowing that he has a clear conscience and is doing God’s will. Also, such a person can have a quiet confidence in dealing with people, knowing firsthand the reality of the Christian faith.

CONCLUSION

Here is the question, “Are you a deacon?” The answer on the most basic level is yes... all Christian are “diaknois” servants, and some are called to serve as deacons in the church (as servant leaders)