

# DEACONS: WORK & QUALIFICATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION:

- A. If we stop at appointing elders, we've stopped too short! (Phil. 1:1)**
- Paul gives here an outline of a fully organized congregation:
    - Saints: Refers to any Christian – Anyone sanctified by the blood of Christ
    - Bishops: As already seen this is just another term for elders – Means overseer
    - Deacons: Another role in the local congregation that we will focus in this study
  - As Paul outlined the qualifications of elders, he also does for the deacons (**I Tim. 3:8-13**)
- B. Some congregations become lax in choosing men to fill this work:**
- They might be very strict and careful when selecting men to serve as elders, however, when it comes to deacons they are not nearly as selective!
  - While it is true that their qualifications allow for a less experienced man to serve, we must have the same attitude toward their qualifications as we do elders: "Likewise..."
  - Let's not make the mistake of appointment men who really aren't qualified to serve because we have a loose view toward their work and qualifications

## I. WHAT ARE DEACONS AND WHAT IS THEIR WORK:

- A. Like with elders, the nature of their work can be seen by looking at what they are called:**
- The word deacon comes from the Greek word "diakonos"
    - Literally: "One who executes the commands of another... especially of a master"
    - Its often translated servant, sometimes minister, and occasionally deacon
    - Of all of the occurrences of this word, only 4 seem to be referring to an official role
  - We learn more about what a deacon is by seeing how the same word is used to describe others or what others did – Even when not in the "official" sense:
    - Its used for how the angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness: (**Mt. 4:11**)
    - The same word is used for the servants at the wedding feast in Cana: (**Jn 2:5**)
    - It describes Phebe as a servant of the church in Cenchrea: (**Romans 16:1**)
    - Timothy would be a good minister of Christ if he properly taught others: (**I Tm 4:6**)
  - What's nature of the deacons' work? Taking care of the physical needs of a congregation
    - Just as elders are to shepherd the flock, seeing after the spiritual needs of a congregation, the deacons are to serve, taking care of the physical needs
    - Deacons free the elders up to concentrate on the spiritual work that is their first priority & not be bogged down with the physical needs that need attention
    - There's too often a breakdown: Elders doing the deacons work, the preacher doing the elder's work, and the deacons left wondering what they should do!
  - The specific duties vary from congregation to congregation depending on their needs:
    - It may be that there are widows or others who have physical needs
    - It might be that they assist the elders in carrying about their work
    - They might look after the care of the building and the grounds around the building
  - What specific work deacons do and how it's divided is a matter of expediency:
    - There really are no concrete guidelines on the division of the deacons work
    - In most congregations the elders find it expedient to divide the work that needs to be done into various categories and assign each deacon to particular category
  - While their work may be the role of a servant and while it may be more physical in nature, it does not diminish the importance of their role in the local congregation
- B. It may be that in dealing with a problem in the early church the apostles organized something like what we see in deacons: (Acts 6)**
- The problem was a serious one! The Grecian widows were being neglected! (**vs. 1**)
    - There was a daily distribution taking place: Other widows who depended on the support were receiving some, while the Greek widows were neglected
    - This problem was a great one because it could have easily split the church in

- Jerusalem – There'd be two different groups separated by backgrounds
2. In order to solve this problem, men were to be selected to serve: **(vs. 2-6)**
    - a. If this did not take place, the apostles were going to have to quit preaching and praying like they were so that they could care for these widows
    - b. So they were to serve so that the apostles could focus on doing their spiritual work
    - c. The word that describes what they did – **serve** – Is the word translated “deacon”
  3. Notice that the apostles charged the congregation to select the men **(vs. 3)**
    - a. These men would not be serving the apostles but the congregation
    - b. It was the congregation who knew the men the best
    - c. Those who were being neglected helped choose the men who'd serve them
  4. Because of the importance of this work, certain types of men were selected! **(vs. 3)**
    - a. Had to have a good reputation: As they served they needed to be respected and trusted by those who were in need and those who reported the problem
    - b. Full of the Holy Spirit: Could include gifts of the H.S. but not necessarily. They were spiritual men! Examples of developing the spirit & its fruit in their lives!
    - c. Had to be full of wisdom: Needed to use wisdom in their care for the widows

*[This brings us to our next point... The type of men to serve as deacons: Their qualifications...]*

## **II. JUST LIKE WITH ELDERS, THERE ARE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS:**

### **A. There are some positive qualifications: What A Deacon Must Be:**

1. They must be reverent men **(I Tim. 3:8)**
  - a. “...A moral dignity which arises from moral elevation, and thus invites reverence”
  - b. He is aware of his influence and strives to be zealous and serious in his life
  - c. Like with the men chosen in Acts 6 – They will have a good reputation
2. They must be holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience **(I Tim. 3:9)**
  - a. This “mystery of faith” is simply another way of describing the gospel of Jesus Christ which for years was a “mystery” that’s now revealed **(Col. 3:3)**
  - b. He must be steadfast and immovable in his stand for the faith! He stands up for what he knows is right and true and does not waver in it!
3. They must first be tested... being found blameless **(I Tim. 3:10)**
  - a. The characteristics must be seen in the lives of the men prior to their selection to serve as deacons → They must be tested... THEN let them serve!
  - b. As with elders, they must be men against whom no charge can be brought! There is currently is no sin in their lives which they haven’t properly taken care of!
4. They must be the husbands of one wife **(I Tim. 3:11-12)**
  - a. This statement rules out a woman serving the Lord’s church as a deacon:
    - 1) Some use Phoebe who is called a “deaconess” in some versions **(Rom 16:1)**
    - 2) It is not necessary to assume she’s serving in an official capacity because the same word often simply refers to one who serves in any capacity!
  - b. As noted with elders this means he must be married and in a proper relationship
  - c. A single man, a widower, a polygamist, or a man who has been divorced and remarried without scriptural grounds is not qualified to serve as a deacon
5. They must rule their children and their own houses well **(I Tim. 3:12)**
  - a. First of all, he must have children! It’s hard to rule what you don’t have!
  - b. While the qualifications for a deacon do not require the man’s children to be faithful to the Lord – It does require that he leads his house well
  - c. He makes wise decisions for his family, he has a good relationship with his wife, and his rule over his children shows a spiritual emphasis **(Genesis 18:19)**

### **B. There are also negative qualifications: What A Deacon Must Not Be:**

1. He must not be double tongued **(I Tim. 3:8)**
  - a. This literally means: “Tell a different story” → He is not a two-faced man
    - 1) While a man can do this without blatantly lying... This is pure deception!
    - 2) He is a man who is always consistent in what he says and means

- b. Could be telling two different stories regarding the same incident or this could be saying one thing while meaning another (**Prov. 26:23-26**)
  - c. Sometimes men are double tongued because they are trying to get their way, sometimes its to cover up the truth that incriminates himself or others
  - d. This type of man has no business serving as a deacon or elder!
2. He must not be given to much wine (**I Tim. 3:8**)
- a. Literally this phrase means “Not to be addicted to much wine”
  - b. There’s great debate in applying this qualification → Certainly this qualification wouldn’t allow freedom in what the Bible forbids by principle in any Christian
  - c. Much of the work of deacons requires them to be sober minded, thinking clearly, and in their right minds – It would be difficult to do this while drunk!
3. He must not be greedy for money (**I Tim. 3:8**)
- a. This means that the pursuit of financial gain is not his prime concern in life and that he does not gain wealth through shady business practices
  - b. As with anyone, the love of money will ruin the man! If this was in the leadership it will have a devastating & leavening effect on the congregation! (**I Tim. 6:9-10**)
  - c. Like with elders – If his heart is in gaining material wealth he will not have the time or energy to focus himself on the spiritual work he should be doing!
4. It doesn’t matter who is most visible, who is the most well off, the most predominant & strong in nature, or who we like the most! He must meet God’s qualifications!

**CONCLUSION:** The work of deacons is a very important work! They are men chosen to serve and assist the elders in carrying out their work, allowing them to focus on spiritual matters. Seek out men who already are doing this work to some degree! Seek men who already have developed the qualifications!