

Message #23

I Timothy 3:12-13

There have always been some very misinformed and misguided believers who think it is unspiritual to think in terms of rewards. William Hendriksen said it well when he wrote: "It is not unscriptural to speak of such incentives. It is unscriptural not to recognize them.... Looking forward to a reward is not at all sinful, provided one plans to use this reward for the glory of God... It is entirely right and natural to regard the reward which is here promised as pertaining to the deacons" (Hendriksen, p. 134).

Being an elder or deacon in God's church is not easy. It is the highest and holiest calling of all. It demands that men discipline themselves and meet certain qualifications. It demands they face pressure and problems and make decisions. God wants His leaders to know that if they faithfully execute their responsibilities, He will reward them. There are some special blessings and rewards promised to leaders who use their office well.

IT IS A MUST THAT THOSE WHO LEAD GOD'S CHURCH MEET THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP AND THOSE WHO DO WILL BE REWARDED IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT LIFE.

HEADING #1 – The qualifications for being a deacon. 3:8-12

So far in this study, we have examined eight qualifications for being a deacon:

Qualification #1 - A deacon must be a man of dignity. 3:8a

A deacon must be very serious about God, His work and His church.

Qualification #2 - A deacon must not be a man who is double-tongued. 3:8b

A deacon cannot be a man who is two-faced, who speaks out of both sides of his mouth, saying one thing to one person and another to someone else.

Qualification #3 - A deacon must not be a man who is addicted to much wine. 3:8c

A deacon cannot be a man known for continually coming alongside of wine and drinking it to the point of intoxication.

Qualification #4 - A deacon cannot be fond of sordid gain. 3:8d

A deacon cannot be one who is out for money, regardless of the manner in which it is gained.

Qualification #5 - A deacon must be a man who holds to the faith system. 3:9

He must be a man who will defend the system of grace and faith as opposed to a system of law and works. He must defend true doctrine with his lips and his life.

Qualification #6 - A deacon must be a man who has been tested. **3:10a**

He cannot be a novice; he must be one who has been tested in the faith and approved as one who is faithful to God and to God's church.

Qualification #7 - A deacon must be a man who is beyond reproach. **3:10b**

A deacon must be one against whom no valid charge of continual reproach or unfaithfulness can be leveled.

Qualification #8 - A deacon must be a man with a godly wife. **3:11**

A deacon's wife must be dignified, not a malicious gossip, controlled and faithful in all areas.

Qualification #9 - A deacon must be the husband of one wife. **3:12a**

In previous study, we have concluded that the most literal and logical interpretation, in view of the specific Greek words, is the interpretation that suggests a man must be a "one woman man," or a "man of one woman." What this means is that one who would lead God's church cannot be a womanizer, he cannot be flirtatious, and must be a man devoted to only one woman, his wife.

Sexual immorality is a sin that, for the believer, is at a whole different level than any other sin. God never wants immorality to be a sin named against His people (Eph. 5:3). In fact, God commands that His people flee immorality (I Cor. 6:18) and specifically says it is His will that His people abstain from sexual immorality (I Thess. 4:3). God also puts sexual immorality among His people, in a sin category all by itself (I Cor. 6:18).

It is a "must" that men, who are officers of His church, be men who have a godly character that is one of being intensely devoted to their wives.

Qualification #10 - A deacon must be a good manager of his children. **3:12b**

The word used for "children" here is one that refers to children of either gender and any age. The term "manager" refers to one who is set over, presides over, one who rules and governs (Smith, p. 381).

A deacon must be one who demonstrates a ruling leadership over his children. If a man cannot lead his own children to see the importance of God, His Word and His church, there is no way he can lead the family of God.

While the children are in the home, they should be under the rule of the father if the father is to be a leader in God's church. Deacons are to be men who are good rulers of their children. They should govern their children in a good and godly way. They should govern their children according to the Word of God, not according to this society, its worldly views and worldly standards.

Qualification #11 - A deacon must be a man who has been tested. **3:12c**

In the Greek text, there is a real emphasis on a man's "own" household. The home and all in the home, including wife and children and anyone else there, is the training ground where a man's leadership ability is proved. If a man cannot lead his own family to see the importance of God, he certainly is in no position to cause others outside his family to see it.

If a man's family is constantly disorderly and a spiritual mess, he cannot rule as a leader, for if he cannot govern his own family, he certainly cannot govern the family of God.

HEADING #2 – The rewards for being a qualified deacon. **3:13**

The "for" which begins **verse 13** explains that there are some special rewards promised to one who faithfully pursues meeting this list of qualifications.

Reward #1 - The reward of a higher standing. **3:13a**

The word "high" speaks of a standing that is at an excellent level. It is good, it is beautiful, and it is way beyond the norm (Smith, pp. 228-229). The word standing is a word that literally means a "step" or another "degree" or "standing" (*Ibid.*, p. 74).

Combined, the words speak of stepping up to another degree or level. Now there have been at least three interpretations as to what this means and, in my opinion, all three are legitimate and true.

(Interpretation #1) - The promotional step in the church.

This interpretation would mean this: if a deacon proves himself to be qualified and faithful as a deacon, he will eventually be given a greater position of responsibility, and he will be promoted to being an elder in the church.

(Interpretation #2) - The positional step with men.

Another interpretation suggests that if a man qualifies himself to be a deacon, he will earn the respect of other people. He will be elevated and esteemed as a man of God because he is meeting the qualifications.

(Interpretation #3) - The positional step with God.

One who is meeting the qualifications and functioning as a faithful deacon receives a high standing in the sight of God and will be greatly rewarded for his faithfulness and service when he gets before God.

The reality is all three are true.

Reward #2 - The reward of great confidence. **3:13b**

A man who has great confidence in faith and great boldness in the faith is one who has been granted a special reward from God for his faithfulness. God grants an extra dimension of confidence and trust in Him to those who are faithful.

I love the words of Richard Lenski, the old Lutheran scholar: “To have served excellently for some time places one beyond any timidity or hesitation and makes him act with boldness and assurance” (p. 604).

A faithful leader will have a God-honoring, God-glorifying boldness that is confident in God and His Word. He will confidently make decisions, which is a reward for his faithfulness. And when it comes time for him to face Jesus Christ, he will face Christ with confidence and not shame, because he realizes his life was conforming to the qualifications of a God-honoring leader (I John 2:28).

Questions worth asking and personally answering:

- 1) Are we meeting the qualifications?
- 2) Do people esteem us highly as being faithful to God?
- 3) Do we have a sense of great confidence in God?
- 4) If Christ were to return today, would we face Him with confidence or shame?