

Message #21**I Timothy 3:8-10**

Like it or not, the church of God is an organization. Being such, it must be organized. There are many things that have to be done if a church is to function as a church, and many of those things are behind scenes kinds of things.

In the Bible there is a special group of men who are very important to church life. In fact, we could say no church will ever become a pillar and support of the truth without this group of men—they are the deacons. Deacons have their own special list of qualifications. Many of the qualifications overlap with that of the elders and some are peculiar to them, probably in view of their specific ministry.

IF A CHURCH IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH, IT NEEDS MEN AS DEACONS WHO ARE MEETING THE BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON.

QUALIFICATION #1 – Deacons are to be men of dignity. **3:8a**

The word “dignity” is one that means that deacons are to be reverent, grave, and serious when it comes to the church of God and the things of God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 404).

As one writer said, deacons ought to be serious men and not a bunch of “clowns.” There is nothing wrong with having fun. There is nothing wrong with laughter. In fact, it is good medicine for the soul; but when it comes to God and the things of God, deacons must be men who are very serious. As H. A. Ironside said, they cannot be men “given to frivolity.”

The more we are in tune with the Spirit of God, the more we will have a sense of reverence, of gravity and of seriousness about God, His Word and His church.

QUALIFICATION #2 – Deacons are to be men that are not double-tongued. **3:8b**

The term “double-tongued” is very rare. It is used to describe the kind of man who is an eloquent two-face.

A deacon is to be a straight-shooter. He is not to be the kind of man who says something one way then turns around to another person and says it just the opposite way. You can never rely on a double-tongued man to speak the truth.

There is no worse reputation that one can establish for him or herself than the reputation of being a liar. Once you have established that you do not tell the truth or that your word is not good, it will be very difficult to again establish your credibility. In fact, Proverbs clearly tells us that when a person becomes known as one who “disguises” things with his lips, we should not believe him (Prov. 26:24-25). Proverbs 26:26 makes it very clear that a liar will eventually be exposed to the whole assembly.

In other words, God will see to it that “double-tongued” people are recognized and when they are, they are not to be put into positions of leadership, certainly not in the office of a deacon. When looking for a deacon, we must look for men who are not double-tongued.

Some applications for all of us:

1. If we are a double-tongued person, eventually God will see to it that the whole assembly knows it.
2. We need to be people of our word. If we say we will do it, we need to do it.
3. We need to be people of backbone.
4. Double-tongued people are not going anywhere in their relationship with God and should not be given leadership responsibilities in God’s church.

QUALIFICATION #3 – Deacons are to be men that are not addicted to wine. **3:8c**

A deacon is not to be a man who turns often to wine or devotes himself to much wine.

In the O.T., a priest engaged in ministry responsibilities and was not to drink any wine while he was engaged in his priestly responsibilities (i.e. Lev. 10:9). In the N.T. age, wine was a drink that was regularly used with meals and it was also used at the communion service.

It is important that a leader in God’s church be one who distances himself from the reputation that he loves to drink alcohol. Therefore, this qualification of not being one who continually comes alongside wine is imperative for both the elder and deacon. When a leader in God’s church becomes fond of alcoholic stimulants, he diminishes God’s testimony.

QUALIFICATION #4 – Deacons are not to be men fond of sordid gain. **3:8d**

The Greek word used here describes a man who is greedy for money and will do whatever it takes to get it, even things that are shady, illegal or unbiblical (Smith, pp. 13-14). The word describes one who will do anything for money, regardless if the method is far-out or foul.

There can be no doubt, from this qualification that deacons are connected to finances and to the money of the church. But they are to be men of integrity when it comes to the subject of money. They are not to be the kind of men who will do whatever to get money. Deacons must be very concerned with the money; but they must always be certain with how the money is being raised.

QUALIFICATION #5 – Deacons are to be men who hold the mystery of the faith in good conscience. **3:9**

The idea behind a Biblical mystery is the idea of something not previously revealed.

A mystery, in this context, would be something revealed in the N.T. Church Age that was not previously revealed in the O.T. Age. Specifically what was revealed was an entire “faith system.” The words “the faith” refer to the entire doctrinal system of the faith system as opposed to the Law.

What Paul is saying is that it is imperative that deacons be stable men of the faith. They must be men who hold and keep to the doctrinal teachings concerning the faith system. They must be men who stand for and hold to a faith system rather than a works system. They must be men who can demonstrate the now revealed truth concerning faith in Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

Notice carefully they must hold to the faith system in “good” conscience. This is not just an academic defense; deacons must be men who have a good conscience about the faith system. In other words, deacons are to be men who truly and purely believe the faith system and defend it and live it.

It is not necessary that a deacon be able to teach; but it is necessary that he be stable and settled in the faith system. The church is asking for trouble when it puts men on its board of deacons who do not have a good conscience about the faith system. One who has a pure conscience is also one who has a pure life. Deacons are to have sound doctrine and a pure life.

QUALIFICATION #6 – Deacons are to be men who have been tested. **3:10a**

The word test has three phases to it: 1) A test; 2) Prove by a test; 3) Approve as the result of a test. Deacons must be men who have proved themselves to be faithful to God, His Word and work as the result of having been tested.

One reason God permits divisive issues to come into a church is so He can make evident who the really faithful people are (I Cor. 11:18-19).

QUALIFICATION #7 – Deacons are to be men who are beyond reproach.

This particular word means to have a reputation that has been established and has not continually had to be called into accountability because of some reproach or reproof (see notes from message #11, p. 1).

Deacons are to be men who have established a good name for themselves as being faithful men of God. If the church is to become a pillar and support of the truth, it needs deacons who take these qualifications seriously.

Are you serious about God, His Word and His church? Have recent tests proved you to be faithful?