



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 6 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH
LESSON 103 – QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVANTS

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Defining the Role of Deacons

- ▶ In defining the role of deacons, the New Testament puts primary weight on a person's moral character, giving us more details on the spiritual qualifications than it does about the specific nature of their duties to the church body.
- ▶ The emphasis is not on organizational structure (a board of deacons, etc.), but on the moral integrity, spiritual maturity, and doctrinal purity of those who serve.
- ▶ The Greek words diakonos (servant), diakonia (service), and diakoneo (to serve) are all used to describe the ministry of a deacon. Note: transliteration.
- ▶ Initially the term was used to describe those serving food and waiting tables (Luke 4:39; 10:40; 17:8; 22:27; John 2:5, 9; 12:2; Acts 6:2).

Defining the Role of Deacons

- ▶ In later usage in the New Testament church it became a group of terms used to define those who served in a capacity to meet the needs of other people within the church (John 12:26; Rom. 13:3-4).
- ▶ These terms were also used to describe spiritual service to the Lord on the part of a believer, including acts of obedience or acts of service on behalf of the church (Acts 20:19; Rom. 12:6-7; 15:25; 1 Cor. 12:5; 16:15; 2 Cor. 4:1; 8:3-4; 9:1; Rev. 2:19).
- ▶ Those recognized by the elders and the congregation to serve in this capacity, above and beyond the duties all believers have toward one another, specifically assist the elders, freeing them to carry out the ministry of prayer and preaching by tending to the practical needs of the church.

Qualifications for Deacons

- ▶ The word likewise in 1 Tim. 3:8 points back to verse 1 where Paul introduces the qualifications for elders or those serving as overseers with the responsibility and authority that come with preaching and teaching the Word in order to equip the members for “the work of service” (ministry, diakonea – Eph. 4:12).
- ▶ Scripture then gives us the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. 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.

Qualifications for Deacons

- ▶ Reverent – honorable in reputation, respectable
- ▶ Not double-tongued – consistent and truthful in their speech and behavior
- ▶ Not given to much wine – not addicted to or controlled by intoxicating drink (or substances), sober-minded, Spirit filled
- ▶ Not greedy for money – not motivated by the love of money or covetousness
- ▶ Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience – theologically grounded in their doctrinal convictions, applying sound doctrine in their care of the church, keeping a clear conscience

Qualifications for Deacons

- ▶ Tested, being found blameless – above reproach, living a life of consistent growth in grace, sanctification, and obedience
- ▶ The husbands of one wife - literally a “one-woman man.” This does not refer to marital status, but to sexual purity and moral integrity, including exclusivity and faithfulness if married
- ▶ Ruling their children and their own houses well - manages his family rightly as a husband and father, having a submissive and godly wife and obedient children, demonstrating his ability to help serve the needs of the church having proven he can care for the needs of his own family

Qualifications for Deacons

- ▶ Verse 11 includes instructions for women who serve the church - 11 Likewise, their wives (women – NASB, NIV, Wycliffe) must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.
- ▶ Reverent - honorable in reputation, respectable
- ▶ Not slanderers – malicious gossips (diabolous)
- ▶ Temperate – sober, free from the control of wine or desire for it
- ▶ Faithful - trustworthy

Qualifications for Deacons

- ▶ 1 Tim. 3:13 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.
- ▶ The office of elder is one of spiritual oversight, leading and feeding the flock. Deacons offer a primarily spiritual service by helping with the physical care of the flock under the direction of the elders.
- ▶ These qualifications encompass spiritual goals that all believers should pursue whether or not they are recognized as serving in a defined role within the ministry of the church.

Terms Used for Deacons

- ▶ Acts 6:1-7; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- ▶ Deaconien Trapedzais – translated “table waiters” in Acts 6:2
- ▶ The Apostles were finding their time consumed with the demands of those needing to be ministered to by the church, but they saw as their calling to be about the ministry of the Word and prayer, so they oversaw the appointment of these first servants of the church. They were to assist in the everyday operations of ministry, especially in the area of provision of basic needs for widows and others in the church.
- ▶ The deacons (lit. servants), submitting to the rulership of the elders, serve the local church in order to free up the elders to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-6). Their delegated duties can include caring for the church finances (1Tim.3:8), ministering to the physical needs of the church (Acts 6:1-6), and assisting in areas of church administration (1Tim.3:12).

Terms Used for Deacons

- ▶ Diakonous/Diakonon – transliterated “deacon” the word literally means “servant.”
- ▶ Philippians 1:1 – they were identified with the elders as representatives of the local church.
- ▶ 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13 – the qualifications for deacons are given.
- ▶ The deacon is a servant of the body assisting in ministry as directed by the elders.

Terms Used for Deacons

- ▶ Gunaikas – translated “wives” or “women”, this word in 1 Timothy 3:11 refers to women who are to serve as deaconesses within the body.
- ▶ Immediate Context:
- ▶ 1. Gunaikas can be translated woman or wife, determined by context. Used in this verse there is no possessive pronoun (their).
- ▶ 2. The text differentiates between classes by using the term “Likewise.”
 - ▶ a. A bishop... - 1 Tim. 3:1-7
 - ▶ b. Likewise a deacon – 1 Tim. 3:8-10; 12-13
 - ▶ c. Likewise the women (serving as deacons) – 1 Tim. 3:11
- ▶ 3. There is no qualification given for an elder’s wife, so why would deacons, serving the church in a position that does not include authority or teaching, be required to have qualifications for their wives?

Terms Used for Deacons

- ▶ Analogy of Faith (let Scripture interpret Scripture):
- ▶ 1. The elders task includes the ability to teach, notating authority, and since women are excluded from serving in positions of authority over the church they are not mentioned here in the list for elders – 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:8-15 (immediately preceding ch. 3).
- ▶ 2. There is no authority assigned with the position of servant. Servants serve at the direction of their master/overseer. Deacons serve the church at the direction of the elders.
- ▶ 3. Phoebe is directly referenced by the adjective diakonon (servant, deacon) in her role with a local church near Corinth – Rom. 16:1

Terms Used for Deacons

- ▶ Proper and Practical:
- ▶ There are things women need done by those caring for them care (physically, etc.), that a woman should carry out. In other words, some work in serving women in the church simply cannot be done by men, for modesty's sake among others - 1 Tim. 2:9 that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, 10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

Simply Servants

- ▶ Deacons (servants) are tasked with assisting the congregation with needs by physical and spiritual service, distribution of provisions, and by serving as a godly example of a mature follower of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ A servant takes orders – be it table waiting, or obeying instructions.
- ▶ Matthew 8:8 The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”
- ▶ Reminder – the term means “servant” and to make the point the only verses where we find the word transliterated instead of translated is in 1 Timothy 3 and Philippians 1:1 - Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.
- ▶ Every other time a derivative of the term diakonon is used it is translated “servant, helper, or minister.” (See Matt. 22:13; John 2:5, 9; 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:15, 23; Heb. 6:10; Rom. 15:8; 16:1).