

The Qualifications of a Deacon **1 Timothy 3:8-13**

1. The office of a deacon is one of the highest in the New Testament. Although the name is not used, the idea of the office and function is first seen in **Acts 6:1-6**.
2. The word "deacon" literally means "one who runs on errands, an attendant, a servant."
3. The deacon is an extension of the pastors and their ministry. The office of deacon was initiated with the purpose of helping the ministry to function more effectively.
4. If godly, qualified men are in position as deacons, this is exactly what will happen. **Acts 6:7**
5. Because of this, the office of deacon carries with it a high standard of qualifications. These are listed in **1 Timothy 3:8-13**.
6. Paul explains in this text what a godly leader looks like. These attributes have nothing to do with popularity or personality - they deal with the man's character, who he is.
7. These are not rules to keep with your checklist in hand. This is simply what a godly, spiritually mature believer looks like. Remember this, leadership is simply spiritual maturity that others can examine and follow.
8. Every believer can grow in grace and in God's Word and become the person this text describes. This is not some spiritually elite group.
9. Let's examine how Paul says a deacon should demonstrate himself in the local assembly.

The qualifications of a deacon

A deacon must be grave. vs. 8

- This word "grave" means "held in high respect by reason of character."
- A deacon's spiritual character and integrity must be beyond question. If not, he will **hinder** instead of **help** the ministry.

A deacon must not be double-tongued. vs. 8

- This means "a talebearer." This is a person who says something to one person and then says something different to another. He misleads people with his words.
- There is no place for a man to be a deacon who cannot control his tongue. He is a time bomb waiting to go off.

A deacon must not be given to much wine. vs. 8

- People use alcohol to forget all their problems - chill out and relax. But the spiritually mature person has the peace of God within and doesn't have to look to any substance for a relaxed peace. He is able to face and confront problems and control his inner spirit through Christ within.
- A deacon, therefore, is mindful of his testimony, refraining from drunkenness or dependence on any substance, but rather depending on Christ and the filling of His Spirit. **Ephesians 5:18**

A deacon must not be greedy of filthy lucre. vs. 8

- This is from the same root word as "covetous." The deacon cannot be in love with money. He must be a man of high financial scruples and ethics.

- This is very important because many times the pastors will ask the deacons to oversee the financial affairs of the local church.
- Jesus is Lord of the deacon's pocketbook. He should lead the congregation in grace giving. He should give bountifully, willingly, and cheerfully to the local church. **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

A deacon must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. vs. 9

- This is speaking of doctrinal purity.
- The deacon has a grasp of sound doctrine, knowing what he believes and why he believes it. He is a student of God's Word, understanding how to rightly divide God's Word and detect teaching that is not in line with the mystery revealed to Paul. **Ephesians 3:1-10**

A deacon must be proved.

- A deacon's life must be tested and proved. He must have established a good and faithful testimony.
- New converts or men who are new to a local assembly should not be deacons. Their doctrine and character must first be tested and proven to that local congregation.

The deacon must be blameless. vs. 10

- This simply means "without public reproach."
- The deacon should have a solid, honest testimony. This doesn't mean the deacon is perfect or above mistakes, nor does it mean that he might not have made mistakes in his past.
- But here is the difference: a spiritually mature man is honest about his mistakes and sins when confronted. He deals with them in an honest, straightforward way, and he doesn't try to lie about them or excuse them.

The deacon must be the husband of one wife. vs. 12

- Many have tried to apply this to divorce, but we discussed this in an entire message. This is not what Paul had in mind. He is dealing with the present character of the man, not his deep, dark past.
- This phrase "husband of one wife" carries the idea of a man who presents himself as a one woman man. He demonstrates himself to be faithful in a monogamous marriage.
- Paul is dealing with the issue of moral fidelity to one woman. This would exclude:
 - A man who was a polygamist (this was common among the aristocrats in Paul's day, as well as in Judea, and still is in many parts of the world today).
 - A man known to be immoral.
 - A man known to be a ladies' man. He likes to play the field. He has an eye for the ladies.
- Here is the issue: Does the man present himself as a man wholly dedicated and committed to one woman? If there is a reason to doubt this, he is disqualified.
- In a culture that was sex-crazed and sex was even a part of their pagan worship, Paul is emphasizing that a spiritual leader is faithful and true to one woman - his wife.
- Paul is stressing the spiritual character of a godly man rather than marking a single experience in his past life for inspection.

A deacon must rule his children and his own house well. vs. 12

- If a man doesn't have his own house in order, he certainly doesn't need to be leading the local assembly.
- The deacon's family is not perfect, but it should be an example of a spiritual home with proper attitudes and priorities seen in his children.

The qualifications of a deacon's wife

Why does Paul lay down qualifications for a deacon's wife?

- Because women can have great influence and lead many people astray if they are not spiritually-minded. **1 Timothy 5:13-14**
- The deacon's wife should be an example to other families in the church. If a deacon's wife is in rebellion to her husband and the Lord, this is certainly no example.
- The deacons and their wives must lead the flock in holy, spiritual living, with unending faithfulness to the Lord and the church of Jesus Christ.

A deacon's wife must be grave. vs. 11

- She, too, must possess spiritual character and integrity that is above question.

A deacon's wife must not be a slanderer. vs. 11

- This same root word is also translated in other places as, "false accusers, devil." It literally means, "a traducer, specifically, Satan."
- Obviously, God does not regard those who slander and gossip about others very highly.
- If a man's wife has a problem controlling her tongue, then this disqualifies the man from serving as a deacon. As an extension of the pastors, the deacon will be privy to many serious issues and "people problems" that must be kept confidential.
- A deacon's wife that has a loose tongue can set the church on fire and destroy it.

James 3:5-6

A deacon's wife must be sober. vs. 11

- This means "sound in mind, seriousness of purpose, self-controlled."
- The deacon's wife should be very serious about serving God with her husband.
- If a deacon's wife will not support and help him in ministering to others, then he should not hold the office of deacon. It will greatly hinder him.

A deacon's wife must be faithful in all things. vs. 11

- Faithfulness is required of God's stewards. **1 Corinthians 4:2**

In Conclusion:

1. As we have seen, Paul is dealing with the present character of a man and his wife, not their past (when they were unsaved or spiritually immature).
2. But is it ever permissible for the church to look at people's pasts to determine if they meet these qualifications? There are two questions to ask in regards to this:
 - First, is it recent past or distant past? Are there known character problems in the person's past since they have been involved in the local assembly? Do they keep reoccurring?

- Second, does looking at certain events in the past help the church in determining the present character of the person?
 - **Example:** if the person has filed bankruptcy repeatedly in their past (even their recent past), there is obvious cause for concern regarding their decision-making and handling of finances.
 - **Example:** if the person has been through numerous divorces and even a divorce since becoming a member of the church, there is obvious cause for concern.
 - **Example:** if a person was divorced 20 years ago before he was saved, but has a testimony to everybody as a faithful, loyal husband, this has nothing to do with the present character of the man. **The church has stepped beyond its Biblical guidelines once it holds a past sin against a candidate regardless of his present character.**
- 3. As we all know, just because a man presently meets these qualifications, there is no guarantee that he will not damage his testimony through sinful behavior.
- 4. If this happens, the deacon should be removed from his position, and the church should seek to help, and minister to this person in a spirit of meekness.

Galatians 6:1