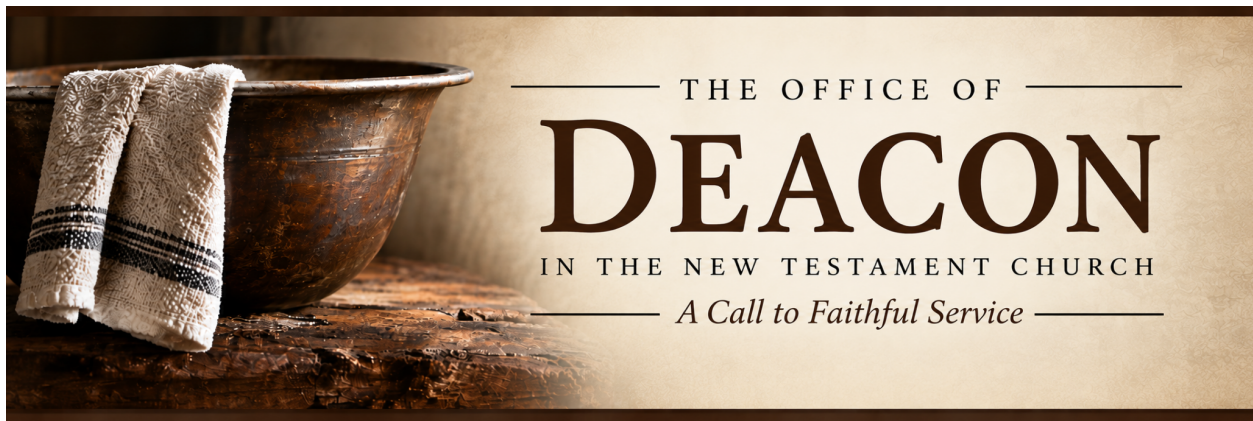




"A Call to Faithful Service"
1 Timothy 3:8-13

Main Point: Deacons are servant leaders, who are called to faithful service in the church.

QUALIFICATIONS for deacons:

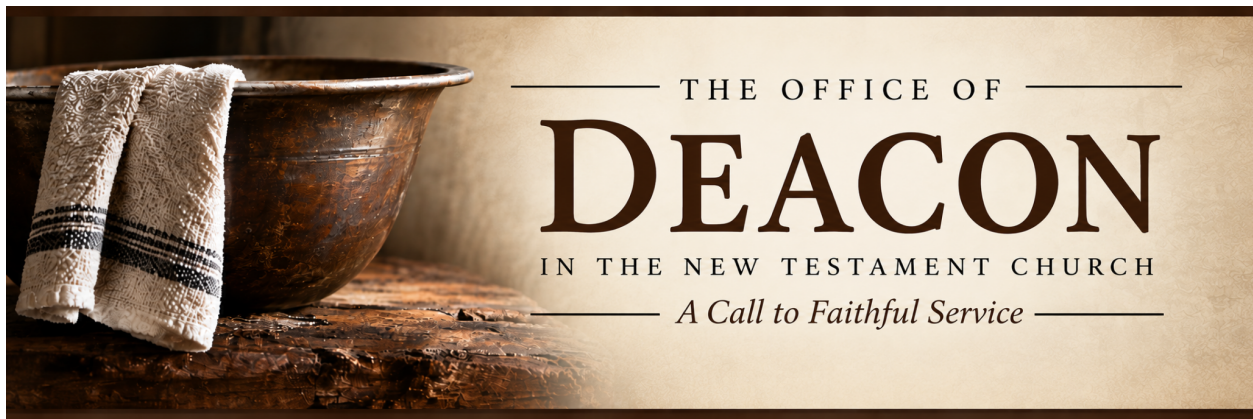
Deacons must display a living faith in Jesus (8-9).

The qualifications for deacons do not start with a set of specific skills, abilities, or knowledge; rather, the qualifications for deacons start with a simple list of character qualities that all point to someone worthy of respect in the church. The list includes four characteristics of "dignity," including three things that the individual should not have in his life and one thing that the individual must have in his life. The three negatives are easy to follow. First, a deacon should not be double-tongued. In other words, a deacon should not say one thing to one person and then turn around and say something different to someone else. Second, a deacon should not be addicted to much wine. Deacons shouldn't allow anything other than God to control their lives and to have influence over their actions. Third, a deacon should not be greedy for dishonest gain. The deacon's responsibilities may include some level of care of church resources, so the motive of the deacon's service must be sacrificial and not selfish. The last characteristic is positive and is most important: A deacon must be a true believer of the gospel! In summary, a deacon must be a follower of Jesus whose life and character display a living faith in Jesus.

1. What do these verses reveal about what's most important to God in our lives?
2. While these verses are qualifications for deacons, does God only expect deacons to display these qualities of faith in their lives? Why, or why not?
3. What do we learn about qualifications for ministry in the church through these verses?

Deacons must be tested to affirm the validity of their faith in Jesus (10).

In contrast to an age where any critical examination of another's beliefs or actions is often criticized, God made it clear that with the role of deacon in his church, there is a need and a requirement to go through a process of examination and scrutiny before calling someone into the office of deacon. In this process of review, the candidate should only be appointed as a deacon if he has been found blameless, but what does "blameless" mean? It can't mean that the individual is perfect and can't make any mistakes. It does, however, mean that their walk with Jesus is genuine. Blameless means that sin is confessed and repented of immediately and faithfully. Blameless means that the trajectory of their life is growth in faith and obedience to the Lord. Blameless means that they are identified most by their faith and not by their failings. A



deacon's life in Christ through faith must be proven in their beliefs and actions for Christ. The bottom line is that deacons must be tested to affirm the validity of their faith in the Lord.

1. Why do we hesitate to examine or scrutinize each other in the church? How is this done in the right way? How is this done in the wrong way? Why?
2. Why is it important in areas of leadership and service in the church that leaders and those serving demonstrate in their lives that their faith is real? Do we do this well in our church? Why, or why not?

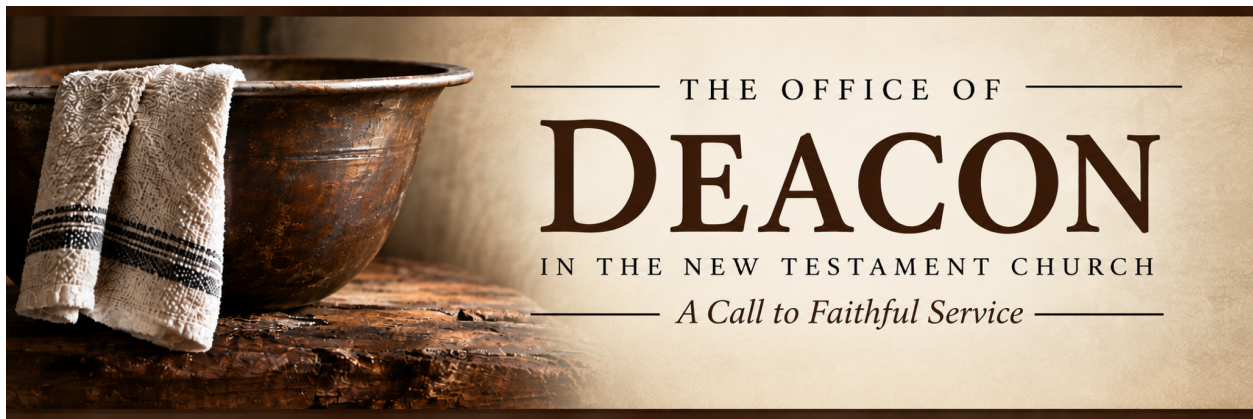
The wife of a deacon must display a living faith in Jesus (11).

The wife of a deacon is included in the qualifications for a deacon, but the question is why is the conduct of the wife important in the consideration of the deacon? The answer is connected to God's design for marriage, which makes the two become one (Gen. 2:24). The faith and life of the wife of a deacon matters because the wife's life is connected to the deacon, and the deacon's life is connected to his wife. The two are one, which means that their individual witness for Jesus impacts their collective witness and work for Jesus. The wife's fundamental call is similar to the deacon, which is to live a life worthy of respect in the church, including not slandering but being "sober-minded" and "faithful in all things." In other words, the life of the wife of a deacon must display a living faith in Jesus.

1. Discuss what would happen to the witness of the deacon if his wife displayed the opposite of these characteristics in verse 11.
2. In this question and the preceding question, how do we rightly interpret "blameless" and "faithful in all things?"

Deacons must display a living faith at home (12).

In the home, deacons should model God's design for the home, which includes God's design for marriage between one woman and one man. Literally, the language of the New Testament states that the deacon should be a "one woman man." In other words, the deacon should model faithful commitment in marriage to one woman. Additionally, a deacon should lead his household in a way that is obedient to God's design for leadership in the home, leading his children to know and to obey the Lord in their lives. Because of the leadership in the ministry that the deacon fulfills in God's household, the expectation is that the deacon will be able to manage his household well. These qualifications don't mean that deacons must have perfect marriages or that their children must be little "angels," never doing anything wrong. However, the qualifications do mean that deacons must deal effectively with things at home in a way that displays a living faith at home. Deacons must strive to be obedient to God's design for their homes, displaying their commitment to lead their home and raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.



1. Why did God point to relationships and behavior within the home as being an important qualification for both deacons and elders in the church?
2. Are these expectations different or similar for all believers? What are some passages that answer this question? Take time to pray for our deacons and their families, as well as for the marriages and families in your small group.

Deacons who serve well grow in their faith in Jesus (13).

God points to a qualitative aspect of service as a deacon when he points to those who “serve well.” It’s possible to be a deacon but to not serve well, but there are benefits for those who serve well, which include two primary things. First, deacons who serve well grow in their witness for Jesus by growing in their standing or influence as servant leaders in and for the church. Second, deacons who serve well grow in their faith in Jesus, gaining “great confidence” in their faith. What a beautiful reminder of the tangible benefits of serving God well in life. Service to God’s call in the life of the deacon will grow the deacon’s faith and will increase the deacon’s witness for God. This is equally true of all believers!

1. Have you experienced this kind of growth through your service to the Lord? Share testimonies and celebrate God’s work in the lives of your group members.
2. Growing in standing in the church isn’t for the purpose of prideful, self-interest, which would be contrary to Scripture, so what is the purpose of growing in good standing in the church?
3. According to verse 13, what is one of the primary keys to growing in great confidence in the faith in Christ Jesus? Do you know your gifts? Are you using them by serving Jesus in His church? Discuss, encourage, and pray for one another toward this end.