



As we nominate candidates for DEACONS, it is important we understand what role they play & what characteristics they must display. But we would each do well to ask another question: "Are these characteristics true of ME?"

**Deacon** comes from the Greek *diakonos* (transplanted from Greek to English - AKA transliterated) simply means **servant**. Sometimes it's used in the Scriptures as anyone who serves. For example, the verb tense of the word is used when John says, "Martha was **serv**ing." (Jn. 12:2)

**Kent Hughes** points to the usage of this term in Scripture.

*"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [deacon], and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served [deaconed], but to serve [to deacon], and to give his life as a ransom for many" (10:43-45).<sup>1</sup>*

Although we've not seen Paul develop a deacon ministry in his missionary journey in our study through Acts, he does call on these men to shadow & serve the **overseers** (mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:1-7).

Paul specifically addresses deacons in Philippians 1:

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**Philippians 1:1** (NET) <sup>1</sup> From Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and **deacons**.

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Notice how Paul names **all the saints** (all believers of the church), **overseers** (leaders), & then **deacons**. These are the men who specifically hold the position & responsibility of serving others inside the church family.

The characteristics we are going to look at are EXPECTED for leaders in the church, but how wonderful would it be if EVERY BELIEVER would strive to live these practices out!!!

☐ While the characteristics we are about to discuss should be true of DEACONS, ask this simple question: **ARE THESE CHARACTERISTICS TRUE OF ME?**

**1 Timothy 3:8-9** (NET) <sup>8</sup> Deacons likewise must be dignified, not two-faced, not given to excessive drinking, not greedy for gain, <sup>9</sup> holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

**Dignified:** respect, honor, restraint, virtue, temperance, honor, and modesty<sup>2</sup>; the work of a deacon requires him to be sensible and steady.<sup>3</sup>

**Not two-faced:** These men are to be sincere (NIV), not deceitful in speech (not "speaking double" - Greek). What he says he means & does.

**Not given to excessive drinking:** Without access to all the drinks that we have today, the norm in their culture to drink wine, sometimes fermented & sometimes not (fresh grape juice). Water sources were sometimes polluted & the small alcoholic content helped make the use of water safe. It seems that some believers stayed away from fermented wine entirely. Paul even

<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 83.

<sup>2</sup> Quinn, Jerome D., and William C. Wacker. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. The Eerdmans Critical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Timothy* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Timothy* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2009), 184.

commanded Timothy "Stop drinking just water, but use a little wine for your digestion and your frequent illnesses." (1 Tim. 5:23)

- In our context there is much confusion as to the significance of alcohol as many churches are engaging in drinking at church events. Does that Bible teach that believers should NEVER drink alcohol? NOPE. But it sure teaches to NEVER get drunk & never to allow anything to master us. (The Greek literally translated says, "Not devoted to much wine).
- Because of the confusion alcohol causes in our culture, we ask that DEACONS stay away from alcoholic drink & encourage YOU to do the same. If you don't drink, you'll never get drunk.

**Not greedy for gain:** A deacon is never to use this ministry for dishonest gain, but to deliver money or goods to help others, trusted with money & stuff.

**Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience:** These guys need to know WHY they believe WHAT they believe - solid followers of Jesus who understand the significance of the Scriptures, what they teach about WHO God is and what God says. Further, these men must be LOYAL to obey to the truths of Jesus as revealed in the Scriptures and will not be quickly swayed by false teaching. In other words, they must have **right beliefs & behaviors**.

### **BIG QUESTION: ARE THESE CHARACTERISTICS TRUE OF ME?**

**1 Timothy 3:10** (NET) <sup>10</sup> And **these also must be tested first** and then let them serve as deacons if they are found blameless.

Being **tested** is more than a one time Q&A or written exam. These servant-leaders should already be living out these characteristics in their ordinary lives - *dignified, not two-faced, not given to excessive drinking, not greedy for gain, & holding to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience.*

Here's how that works at Fellowship.

- 1) You help us nominate men who meet the 1 Timothy 3 standards.
- 2) Our elder deacons will then prayerfully discuss the nominations, interview worthy nominees & their wives, & then present those **found blameless** to the church.
- 3) A 2-week vetting process will enable private conversations about any concerns regarding these nominees (with pastor or current deacons).
- 4) Men who make the cut & accept the nomination will **serve as deacons**.

But before we nominate these men, there are some other factors to consider. Deacons' wives should echo these characteristics too.

**1 Timothy 3:11** <sup>11</sup> Likewise also their wives must be dignified, not slanderous, temperate, faithful in every respect.

There is some debate as to whether these women are female deacons - or deaconesses. One reason? Wives of overseers in 1 Tim. 3:2-7 of not referred to in this way and it seems strange to hold deacon's wives to a standard that overseers wives are not. Secondly, the Greek word translated as wives can mean either "woman" or "wife."<sup>4</sup> Conservative scholars disagree whether this is referring to a position of deaconess (cf. Rom. 16:1-2) or wives of deacons.

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 75.

Southern Baptist tradition has viewed this as deacons' wives who are **dignified, not slanderous, temperate, faithful in every respect**. But, as always, we should desire to bend our beliefs to fit the Bible instead of bending the Bible to fit our beliefs.

Are there such things as female deacons? We won't attempt to address that today, but we will continue to research and rightly interpret what the Scriptures intend.

What there should be no debate about: These godly servant-leaders (DEACONS) should have godly wives who serve beside them. How important is it that the deacon's wife be ready to help a lady that might put the deacon in an awkward situation?

And now look how the deacon/servant-leader impacts his own household.

**1 Timothy 3:12** <sup>12</sup> Deacons must be husbands of one wife and good managers of their children and their own households.

This is the picture of a godly man, a servant who is leading his family well. The man's wife and children are his best qualifications - **his living resumé**. What he leads & lives in the home has no choice but to overflow into the church.

There is NO QUESTION that he is "*a one woman man*" (Greek).<sup>5</sup> In fact, this is what the Greek phrase means.

Many have taken this to mean a divorced man can never serve in this position.

1. Did Paul mean that a overseer/deacon MUST be married? Because HE wasn't.
2. Did Paul mean that a a widower can't remarry and serve as a deacon? Doubtful.
3. Did Paul mean a man can't be divorced? He could have said that very clearly, but he didn't.

🕒 The focus isn't his marital status but his sexual purity.

☀️ **Kent Hughes** "*He must be a one-wife man. No other woman can have his affections maritaly, mentally, or emotionally. His wife ought to occupy his full horizon. He must love her as he loves himself...A one-wife man places his wife at the center of his heart.*"<sup>6</sup>

If he meets these qualifications, he may hold the official title of **DEACON, a servant-leader**.

**1 Timothy 3:13** <sup>13</sup> For those who have served well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

What a great honor and privilege to be recognized as servant-leaders who serve the body of Christ by visiting the sick, helping meet financial needs, praying for those struggling, & putting their hands to hard work to help meet real needs. They **gain a good standing** in the eyes of people & **a great boldness** in trusting Jesus.

**BIG QUESTION: ARE THESE CHARACTERISTICS TRUE OF ME?**

<sup>5</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., 1 Timothy, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 103.

<sup>6</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 87.