



## **Servant Leaders** (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

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?"

\* All Scripture is from the NET (New English Translation) unless otherwise noted.

**Deacon** comes from the Greek *diakonos* = **SERVANT** (transplanted from Greek to English - AKA transliterated)

Sometimes it's used in the Scriptures as anyone who is serving: "Martha was **serv**ing." (Jn. 12:2)

Look how this term is often translated in Scripture.

**Mark 10:43-45** (NET) <sup>43</sup> ...whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant [**deacon**], <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served [**deaconed**] but to serve [**deacon**], and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Paul calls on **deacons** to shadow & serve the **overseers** (mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:1-7). He specifically addresses **deacons** in Philippians 1.

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

Paul names **all the saints** (all believers of the church), **overseers** (leaders), & then **deacons** - those who hold the position & responsibility of serving others inside the church family.

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

### **BIG 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:** These are to be men of respect, honor, restraint, virtue, temperance, honor, and modesty.<sup>1</sup> The work of a deacon requires him to be sensible and steady.<sup>2</sup>

**Not two-faced:** The literal Greek means *two-tongued*, deceitful in speech. The deacon is NOT to be deceptive/hypocritical in his language or actions. What he says he means & does. This is a good practice of ALL BELIEVERS.

**Not given to excessive drinking** (Greek - *much wine*): Excessive drinking leads to addiction, apathy, and abuse. In that day it was a 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 commanded Timothy "Stop drinking just water, but use a little wine for your digestion and your frequent illnesses." (1 Tim. 5:23)

- While the Scriptures don't demand abstinence from alcohol, they condemn drunkenness & allowing anything to master us.

- Since the use of alcohol causes in our culture, we ask that DEACONS abstain from alcoholic drink & encourage our precious church 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. Deacons might need to deliver money or goods to help, so it is imperative that he is trusted with money & stuff. And so, as **Os Guinness** says, the deacon was not drunk on wine or money.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</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>2</sup> Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Timothy* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2009), 184.

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 85.

**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. They must have both **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 and **found blameless**. This does NOT mean they have never sinned; it means that they are blameless in regard to meeting the characteristics of 1 Tim. 3 - *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 current deacons will then prayerfully discuss the nominations, interview worthy nominees & their wives, & then present those **found blameless** to the church.
- 3) There will then be a 2-week vetting process to enable private conversations about any concerns regarding these nominees (with pastor or current deacons).
- 4) Afterwards, the 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** 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* (deaconesses). One reason? ***Wives of overseers in 1 Tim. 3:2-7 are 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.*

Southern Baptist tradition has viewed this as deacons' wives who are **dignified, not slanderous, temperate, faithful in every respect**. We should desire to bend our beliefs to fit the Bible instead of bending the Bible to fit our beliefs (i.e. traditions). ***Are there such things as female deacons?*** We won't attempt to tackle that today, but we will continue to research and rightly interpret what the Scriptures intend.

What there should be no debate about is that these godly servant-leaders (DEACONS) should have **godly wives who serve beside them**. The deacon's wife must be ready to minister to other ladies, which will be more effective and keep her husband from being put in an awkward situation.

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

**1 Timothy 3:12** 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> This is what the Greek phrase actually 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. There is not mention of Timothy or Titus being married.
  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. We used to give a divorced man a different title
- ➡ The focus isn't his marital status but his sexual purity.

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

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

☀ **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 the man 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.

Deacons serve an important task by ministering to folks in our church & community by visiting the sick, helping meet financial needs, praying for those struggling, & putting their hands to hard work to help meet real needs. Our current deacons have **served well** and continue to do so, and thereby **gain a good standing** in the eyes of people & a **great boldness** in trusting Jesus and pointing others to Him.

🕒 Today, you have the honor to and privilege to nominate up to 4 more **servant-leaders** who serve the Body of Christ and beyond. PRAYERFULLY consider which men on this list meet these criteria and should serve in this way. **Circle up to 4 names and get that back to us anytime this week** - starting today through NEXT SUNDAY.

Ask yourself this question, this week:

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

What if we all were striving to *dignified, not two-faced/2-tongued, not slanderous not given to excessive drinking, not greedy for gain, holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, temperate, & faithful?* What if we all were *completely committed to our spouses and good managers of our own households* - leading our families to follow Jesus?

### **How might God use a church like that to impact a community like ours?**

Let's go find out!

🕒 You can turn in your nomination form today by placing it on the stage OR turn it into the office or any staff member through next Sunday.

\* **Want to talk further?** Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon! Or call our deacons & wives: **Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero**.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What challenged or encouraged you from today's teaching? (Look back over your notes and share!)
2. **Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13.** Take time to discuss the characteristics in this passage one by one. Why are these qualities important not just for deacons and their wives, but for ALL followers of Jesus?
3. Pray for our current deacons & wives: Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero. Consider encouraging them face-to-face, or via text or note. Also, pray for God's guidance for the next deacons/couples to serve.
4. Pray for one another this week. Consider texting or calling same sex believers to pray and share together this week.