

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(6)

1 TIMOTHY: DUTIES AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH, 1 Timothy 2:1-3:13

The Deacons of the Church, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

(1 Timothy 3:8-13) **Introduction:** this passage discusses the second officer of the church, the deacon. The office of deacon is so important that the qualifications required are just as high as those demanded of a minister or bishop. In this day and time, when worldliness, immorality, and lawlessness are running so rampant, the qualifications for deacons need to be studied, heeded, and guarded ever so diligently.

1. Personal qualifications (v.8).
2. Spiritual qualifications (v.9-10).
3. Family qualifications (v.11-12).
4. Results: reward reaped (v.13).

1. (1 Timothy 3:8) Deacons— Church, Officer of: deacons must be qualified; they must meet some personal qualifications.

1 Timothy 3:8 (NASB)

⁸Deacons likewise must be men of [grave] dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,

In 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Paul lists those qualifications for both male deacons and female deacons (deaconesses). He then closes by mentioning the reward for those who serve faithfully.

Likewise is a key transition word that serves to introduce a new category within the overall topic of church leaders. Having discussed elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul now gives five areas in which a deacon must be qualified.

Personal Character

1 Timothy 3:8 (NASB)

⁸Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain.

After that positive trait come three negative ones.

2. Deacons must not be **doubletongued** (*mē dilogous*): bearing tales, gossiping, saying “one thing to one person and something different to another [person]” (Donald Guthrie. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, p.84); saying one thing to a person’s face and something else behind his back. No more descriptive word could be chosen than “doubletongued.”

The quality of *not being double-tongued* is important. As a deacon ministers through visitation (**going from house to house**) he is often tempted to gossip or say one thing to

one person and something else to another person. He is also tempted to evade or smooth talk issues. Therefore, he must be a man of integrity, a man who speaks the straight truth—a man who is as honest as the day is long.

***Dilogous* (double-tongued)** appears only here in the New Testament. Some think it refers to a gossip, a person who has, so to speak, not one but two tongues going. It doesn't only mean that or could be interpreted that way. It seems best, however, to interpret it as a prohibition against saying one thing to one person and another thing to someone else.

A deacon's speech must not be hypocritical, but be characterized by integrity, consistency, and honesty. A man who tells different stories to different people will quickly lose their confidence, and manifest a duplicitous and manipulative motive.

1 Timothy 5:13 (NASB)

¹³ At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.

James 1:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

1 Peter 4:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

Leviticus 19:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.

Proverbs 11:13 (NASB)

¹³ He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.

Proverbs 18:8 (NASB)

⁸ The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

Proverbs 20:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.

Proverbs 26:20 (NASB)

²⁰ For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.

1 Timothy 3:8 (NASB)

⁸ Deacons likewise must be men of [grave] dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,

3. The deacon must not be given to much wine (see note above, Minister, pt.8—**1 Timothy 3:2-3** for discussion).

A second prohibition forbids deacons from being **addicted to much wine**. *Prosechō* (**addicted to**) means “**to turn one’s mind to,**” or “**to occupy oneself with,**” hence the NASB translation **addicted to**. The present active participle “**not**” indicates this is to be the deacon’s habitual practice.

He is not to be preoccupied with drink, nor to allow it to influence his life. Some may wonder why the Lord did not call for total abstinence.

As **Homer Kent** points out, however,

“It is extremely difficult for the twentieth-century American to understand and appreciate the society of Paul’s day. The fact that deacons were not told to become total abstainers, but rather to be temperate, does not mean that Christians today can use liquor in moderate amounts. The wine employed for the common beverage was very largely water. The social stigma and the tremendous social evils that accompany drinking today did not attach themselves to the use of wine as the common beverage in the homes of Paul’s day. Nevertheless, as the church grew and the Christian consciousness and conscience developed, the dangers of drinking came to be more clearly seen. The principle laid down elsewhere by Paul that Christians should not do anything to cause a brother to stumble came to be applied to the use of wine.”

Certainly in present-day America, the use of wine by a Christian would abet a recognized social evil, and would set a most dangerous example for the young and the weak. To us, Paul would undoubtedly say, “No wine at all.” (**Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*** [Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1982], 133)

Irwin Woodworth Raymond states it this way:

“If an individual by drinking wine either causes others to err through his example or abets a social evil which causes others to succumb to its temptations, then in the interests of Christian love he ought to forego the temporary pleasures of drinking in the interests of heavenly treasures.” (**Irwin Woodworth Raymond, *The Teaching of the Early Church on the Use of Wine and Strong Drink*** [New York: Columbia Univ., 1927], 88)