

1st Timothy
Chapter 3:8-15
“All About Deaconing”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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First Timothy, remember is a book about the church. How the church should run and what its focus should be ... emphasizing the responsibility of each person in each fellowship.

Last week the individuals that we looked at were the Pastors and the Elders; what the qualifications are, how they're to be appointed and what their jobs consist of.

This week, we'll look similarly at Deacons. What a person needs to be looking at and working toward if they feel that God has that calling on their life.

But first ... to review from last week:

- 1.** Pastors are responsible for shepherding the flock; deciding what spiritual grass to feed them and what watering hole to lead them to. The Shepherd is responsible for deciding the overall direction of the flock.
- 2.** Elders are responsible for providing spiritual guidance within the flock. These are men with spiritual maturity and wisdom who share what stems from that. They're to be available to members of the flock individually and to give guidance to, and provide accountability for, the Pastor(s).
- 3.** Deacons and Deaconesses are spiritually mature men and women ... called on to exercise that maturity in hands on ... practical ways. Maybe serving Communion or organizing events or ministering to the physical needs of the body.

In the Greek it's the word diakonos (dee-ak'-on-os) and it simply means a servant. Literally ... one who runs errands or attends to others.

Q. So if that's all “Deacon” means. “a servant”, is every servant then called a Deacon? – No. This section tells us that there are individuals who've been granted the title and position of Deacon or Deaconess.

Now some people have the misconception that a titled post, like Pastor or Elder or Deacon, is, in some way, like a promotion. You might think that a person's service to the Lord starts as a member of some congregation and then you get “promoted” to a servant and then a Deacon and then an Elder and if you really, really behave yourself, you get “promoted” to Pastor, but that's a very, very inaccurate understanding.

Listen to ...

Acts 13:1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon ..., and Lucius ..., and Manaen ..., and Saul. **2** While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **3** Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

So, it's God's call as to who does what. Man's role is limited to recognizing and receiving that call. It's not a promotion at all ... it's simply hearing God and then saying "yes" or "no" to His plan.

Q. But still ... why have titles? -- A title is nothing more than a recognition of God's call and plan. Titles are not to be sought after, but neither should they be shunned.

If your car breaks down ... you look for someone with the title, "Mechanic". That title tells you that they're trained and qualified to fix your car. If your toilet backs up ... you call someone with the title, Plumber. Because of that title, you know they're the right person for the job.

Likewise, in the church ... God calls and equips ... and man recognizes certain individuals within the body who've met the minimum requirements and been gifted by the Lord for specific jobs ... and if that job happens to have a title ... then take the title so others will know who to call when that gifting is needed.

Q. So what's the difference between a Deacon and every other servant? – That's what this section, beginning with **verse 8**, is all about ... so let's have a look ...

Verses 8-10: As we did with the prerequisites for Pastors and Elders ... let's look individually at this list of qualifying factors for Deacons ...

1. A Deacon must be a man of dignity ... or integrity (**verse 8**). A man who's honest and trustworthy. In fact, those things are really the marks of a Deacon. A Deacon is a man whose word is truth. If he says it ... take it to the bank.

2. A Deacon must not be double tongued (**verse 8**). That is ... a Deacon can't be a people-pleaser. He can't go around telling each person what they want to hear ... saying one thing to this person and another thing to that person. He must be one who simply speaks the truth ... win, lose or draw!

3. A Deacon must not be addicted to much wine (**verse 8**). Some of you may remember a similar prerequisite for Pastors and Elders in **verse 3** ... but note the difference ... it says that Pastors and Elders cannot be "**addicted to wine**", but here it says that a Deacon cannot be "**addicted to much wine**".

As we saw last week ... Pastors and Elders are not to sit at the wine barrel and here we see that Deacons are not to sit at the wine barrel for an extended period. Although that's not defined any further.

4. A Deacon must not be fond of sordid gain (**verse 8**). A Deacon can't be a greedy man or one who will do or condone anything underhanded for monetary gain. He must love pleasing God more than he loves money.

5. A Deacon must be a man who holds the mystery of faith with a clear conscience (**verse 9**). This is saying that they must have a solid relationship with Christ and by that have a solid faith in, His finished work on the cross.

The extension of that being that a Deacon shouldn't be one who's burdened by guilt, because of any doubts about the power of Christ's forgiveness.

The truth is that any person who's plagued by guilt ... is a burden to the flock, not a blessing to it. That person is being deceived by the enemy who wants nothing more than to keep us all weighed down with the guilt of our sin. The same sin that Jesus took from us on the day of our salvation.

So, a Deacon must be someone who rejoices daily in their eternal forgiveness.

6. A Deacon must be a man who's been tested and passed the test (**verse 10**). The word "tested" here is dokimazo (dok-im-ad'-zo) and it means to try, prove or discern. It does NOT mean that we're to measure the bad to see if they fail ... but rather, it means that we're to measure the good to see if they pass.

Obviously, the outcome will ultimately be the same, but the Lord wants us to have the right heart toward it ... because love hopes the best (**1st Corinthians 13:7**).

But still ... no one is to be recognized as a Deacon until they've been tested. Jesus had this in mind when he said in ...

Matthew 7:20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

We're to be fruit inspectors ... testers of one another so that we might see the work that God's done and put an individual's giftings to the appropriate use.

7. A Deacon must be beyond reproach (**verse 10**) ... now this is a bit different from the qualification for Pastors or Elders in **verse 2**. Remember there it says "**above reproach**" ... anepileptos (an-ep-eel'-ape-tos), but here it says "**beyond reproach**" ... anegkletos (an-eng'-klay-tos).

For the pastor and elder, the qualification is that they cannot have anything in their life on which an adversary could base a charge ... past or present.

But here for the Deacon, this word anegkletos (an-eng'-klay-tos) is less stringent ... meaning one who is free of all legal charges.

Now we come to a point of controversy. This question is ...

Q. Is verse 11 talking to Deacons about their wives or is it talking directly to women who are Deaconesses? – Well ... I don't know for sure, but my guess is that it's talking to and about women who are Deaconesses, because unlike the offices of Pastor and Elder, the office of Deacon ... or Deaconess, is a scripturally valid one.

Among others, we have Phoebe in **Romans 16:1** who's called a Deaconess, but **1st Timothy** is really the only place where instructions for the office are given so let's see what those are ...

Verse 11:

A. A Deaconess must be dignified (**verse 11**) ... the same word we looked at for the Deacon. A Deaconess must walk in integrity. They must be honest and trustworthy.

It's no coincidence that integrity and honesty and trustworthiness are the first qualities listed for both the Deacon and the Deaconess. They follow only salvation itself in terms of their importance for this office.

B. A Deaconess must not be a malicious gossip (**verse 11**). She can't be a person who's prone to sharing tidbits to stir-up or entertain people.

Charles Spurgeon once turned to the Deacons in the middle of his Sunday morning service and announced, in an obvious moment of frustration ...

I want everyone who spreads gossip suspended by their tongues and everyone who listens to it suspended by their ears.

A Deaconess must be a woman who knows how to keep quiet.

C. A Deaconess must be temperate (**verse 11**). Although it translates to the same English word, it's a different Greek word from the one used in **verse 2** where it says that a Pastor or Elder must be temperate.

Here it simply means to conduct yourself with your head up and your eyes open. To be continually on the alert and on the lookout. A necessary quality for a Deaconess.

D. A Deaconess must also be faithful in all things (**verse 11**). Literally, this is a warning against appointing those who seem to have their own agenda with regard

to positions of leadership.

And it's addressed specifically and exclusively to women ...

Q. Why? -- Not necessarily because women are more prone to manipulating people into fulfilling their own agendas, but, I believe, because they're dangerously better at it!

So, a Deaconess must be faithful in all things. Wanting God's desire fulfilled even when it's contrary to their own.

Now ... back to Deacons ...

Verses 12-13: So ...

8. A Deacon must be the husband of only one wife (**verse 12**) ... as for Pastors and Elders, as I said last week, I believe this to mean one wife at a time. Not that divorcees and widowers are excluded.

If you weren't here and you want more information on that, you can go to our website and either listen to the message or read the notes.

9. A Deacon must be a good manager of their children (**verse 12**), and ...

10. A Deacon must be a good manager of their household (**verse 12**). Again ... not that your children will do everything right or that your household will never be shaken, but it's saying that you must have done the right things in the home and on behalf of your children in order to be qualified as a Deacon.

Q. So earlier, I ask ... if "Deacon" simply means "servant" ... what's the difference between a Deacon and every other servant of God? – The answer is choice and recognition.

A Deacon is one who's, not only scripturally qualified ... not only tested ... but one who's said "yes" to God's call and that's been recognized by peers and spiritual leaders as a man or a woman who is dependable, hardworking and trustworthy, because to put that title on a man or woman is to announce to the flock they serve ... that this is a person you can count on.

Now finishing off this section on leadership ... Paul says to Timothy there in Ephesus ...

Verses 14-15: I think, to an extent, **verse 15** can be claimed as the central point of the entire book of **1st Timothy** ...

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and

support of the truth.

It's been said that "People cannot change truth, but truth can change people." And that's right on!

Because God's in the business of changing people, His church must doggedly protect and share the truth ... and that is ... The Word of God.

And in large part, the system of church government that this letter's all about ... is designed to help us do just that.

Conclusion: So, those are the guidelines for individuals who desire to serve in the capacity of Deacon or Deaconess. And in **the first seven verses** ... the guidelines for those who desire to serve in the capacity of Pastor or Elder.

Some rather lofty qualifications in my view.

Not qualifications based on education or talent, but qualifications based on integrity and dedication ... qualifications based on the choices and commitments we make. Lofty qualifications!

Q. And why are they so lofty and strict? – Because we're talking about those called to tend to, and look after, the bride of Christ ... God's church. That body of individuals known as the sons and daughters of God.

Shortly before the Apostle Paul was martyred, he met with the pastor and other leaders at Ephesus and gave them this charge ...

Acts 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

When you're picking out someone to whom you must entrust your children ... no doubt you have a pretty lofty list of qualifications. I'd certainly be picky if for some reason I needed to entrust my bride to someone.

But even so ... there are people I know ... that I could trust with my wife. People that I could trust with my children and grandchildren. I know men and women that I'm absolutely certain would never hurt or violate them. People that I know would care faithfully for them.

Q. And what makes me so certain? Is it because of the love they have for my family? – No ... some of them don't even know my family! So, it wouldn't be their love for them that would fill me with confidence. In fact, that would probably worry me.

No ... any confidence that I had would be based on their love for me. They would care

faithfully for my family because of their love for me.

So, when God's looking for a man or woman to use in the care of His kids. A man or woman to use in the oversight of His bride ... He's always looking for someone who loves Him more than anything else.

There is no greater qualification than a sober love for Him.

Not the most talented or most educated, but the one who really loves Him. Because it is the man or the woman who really loves God that can truly be trusted with the care and oversight of His family.