

THE QUALIFICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

While both elders and deacons are to be believers who are serving the Lord, their distinction is clearly indicated by deacons having separate stated qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13) from the pastor/elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7). First of all, their difference lies in the area of authority, as elders have spiritual authority over deacons. Deacons (diakonos - literally, a servant) are to carry out the guidance of the elders. A second area of difference is that the elders are to serve the Lord and His church by feeding and leading God's flock (Acts 20:28), while the deacons are to assist the elders, oftentimes by addressing the physical needs of the church (Acts 6). Thirdly, an elder must be "apt to teach" (skilled/gifted in teaching - 1 Timothy 3:2), while no such requirement is placed on a deacon. The elder's primary emphasis is the ministry of the Word and prayer. This occurs while providing for the spiritual needs of the local church and 'shepherding the flock of God among us' (1 Peter 5:1-5). So the areas of authority, departments of function and giftedness distinguish an elder from a deacon.

ELDER

- Above reproach. Lifestyle is such that no one can legitimately accuse of conduct that is unbecoming a mature believer. However, this does not mean he is perfect or without room for improvement.
- Not a new convert
- Devout a definite commitment to know, love, and walk with God?
- Holding fast to the faithful word . . . able to exhort . . . and refute . . . a student of the Bible? Knowing the Word well enough to teach it to others. Using the Word of God to encourage people with sound doctrine and to challenge those who are opposed to the faith or the truth of Scripture.
- If a man aspires to the office of overseer (1 Tim. 3:1). A strong desire to serve the Lord and the body of Christ as an overseer of the flock. (1 Pet. 5:2, "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God")
- Temperate (1 Tim. 3:2). In the everyday situations of life reacting according to biblical principles so that he remains under God's control. Spirit-controlled and disciplined rather than self-indulgent.
- Prudent (1 Tim. 3:2). Cautious or biblically minded to the extent that he walks wisely according to the wisdom of Scripture?
- Not quick tempered (Tit. 1:7). Emotionally stable and in control of his feelings?
- Husband of one wife (1 Tim.3:2; Tit.1:6). If married, totally devoted and faithful to his own wife

- One who manages his own household well (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6). His wife loves, respects, and follows his leadership, and his children are believers, under control, respectful of authority, and responding positively to God.
- Hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Literally, "a lover of strangers." Sharing with others in order to minister to their needs?
- Able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Able to communicate the Word of God to others.
- Not self-willed (Tit. 1:7). As a servant, an elder must seek to please God and care for others, able to set aside his own preferences in order to promote unity and care for the needs of others.
- Loving what is good (Tit. 1:8). Literally, "a lover of goodness." He is a man who is devoted to that which is good or beneficial either in things, deeds, or people in order to build them up rather than tear them down?
- Not pugnacious or a striker, i.e., anger out of control either physically or verbally abusive (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7).
- Uncontentious (1 Tim. 3:3). He is not a quarrelsome person who struggles against others for self-seeking reasons such as jealousy or selfish ambition. He may strongly disagree, but he will state his case without being controversial.
- Gentle (1 Tim. 3:3). This word in the original Greek text refers to strength under control, like a powerful, but gentle horse. He should handle others in a gentle, patient, and gracious way.
- Just (Tit. 1:8). In his relationships with others, making just decisions, those that are wise, fair, impartial, objective, and honest according to the principles of Scripture?
- Respectable, orderly, balanced (1 Tim. 3:2). Respected by others because his life adorns the Word of God? The basic idea of this word is orderly. It describes a man whose behaviour is good and blended harmoniously in a balanced manner.
- Having a good reputation with those on the outside (1 Tim. 1:7). Having a good reputation among unbelievers because he has a life-style of unquestioned integrity.
- Free from the love of money (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Not seeking his significance, security, and primary satisfaction from material wealth. Not involved in dishonest business practices.
- Not addicted to wine (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Free from any form of substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc.) or any kind of addiction which might take control of his life, cause belligerent and irresponsible behaviour, and cause weaker Christians to stumble (Rom. 14:13-21)

DEACONS

The role of the deacon is to help the Bishop/Elders attend to the people's many practical needs (Acts 6:1-6). Deacons are the church's ministers of mercy. The Deacon is responsible for the care of all matters pertaining to the physical properties and the finances of the church, subject to the oversight of the Pastors and elders. They are also responsible for such duties as welcoming, hospitality, caring for the needy within the congregation, and highlighting those needs to the Pastors. A Deacon's life and character must pass certain criteria before they can qualify to serve. The Scriptures dictate the qualifications. At the discretion of the local congregation, a female meeting the qualifications may be selected to serve as a deaconess. Please be well aware that in this congregation we have no qualms about females being in positions of service as God calls them.

- The deacon must be chosen from "among you" (Acts 6:3), a lay member of the local congregation for at least one year.
- The deacon must be of good reputation, "men of honest report" (Acts 6:3). The confidence and trust of the congregation and community are essential.
- The deacon is in a spiritual ministry, "full of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 6:3), according to Acts 2:4 and continuing to be "full" (Ephesians 5:18).
- The deacon is required to make decisions in practical and temporal matters as well as giving support to the pastors in spiritual matters, so sound direction and wise counsel requires them to have "wisdom" (Acts 6:3).
- The deacon must be willing to be involved in the work of God through the church; they are to "serve" (Acts 6:2).
- The deacon is to be "grave" (1 Timothy 3:8), i.e., committed, dedicated, steadfast and serious.
- The deacon is "not double tongued" (1 Timothy 3:8), i.e., a person of their word, dependable.
- The deacon is "not given to much wine" (1 Timothy 3:8), i.e., they is temperate and do not depend on physical stimulants.
- The deacon on is "not greedy of filthy lucre" (1 Timothy 3:8), i.e., a faithful steward in tithing, generous, and not motivated by money.
- The deacon is proper in his doctrine, "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Timothy 3:9), fully pledging to the doctrine of the Christian faith.
- The deacon is a mature believer, (1 Timothy 3:10) "and let these also first be proved" .
- The deacon, if married is faithful in that marriage, the husband "of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:12) and that wife must be an example of the Christian life, "grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (1 Timothy 3:11).
- The deacon leads their home in Christ, "ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Timothy 3:12).