



# **DEACONS**

**Leading through Serving**

## Deacons

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13

### ‘A study on Deacons’

Comparing the office of deacon to the office of elder will help us understand the role of a deacon. The primary spiritual leaders of a congregation are the elders, who are also called overseers or pastors in the New Testament.

Elders teach or preach the Word and shepherd the souls of those under their care.

Ephesians 4:11 ‘So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.’

1 Timothy 3:2 ‘Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.’

1 Timothy 5:17 ‘The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.’

Titus 1:9 ‘He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.’

Hebrews 13:17 ‘Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.’

Deacons, too, have a crucial role in the life and the health of the local church, but their role is different from the elders’. The Biblical role of deacons is to take care of the physical and logistical needs of the church so that the elders can concentrate on their primary calling.

This distinction is based on the pattern found in Acts 6:1–6 ‘In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.’

The apostles were devoted ‘to prayer and to the ministry of the word’ Acts 6:4. Since this was their primary calling, seven men were chosen to handle more practical matters in order to allow the apostles the freedom to continue with their work.

This division of labour is similar to what we see with the offices of elder and deacon. Like the apostles, the elders’ primary role is one of preaching the Word of God. Like the seven, deacons serve the congregation in whatever practical needs may arise.

For a man to serve as a deacon in the Lord’s church, he must meet the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit. These qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 ‘In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.’

Deacons are important to our congregation, they are a distinct group of men that serves the congregation. This is seen in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, which he addresses to the saints, including the elders and deacons. **Philippians 1:1** ‘To all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.’

The Word ‘**Deacon**’ is translated from the Greek word ‘**diakonos**’ and means ‘**servant**.’ It’s used regarding different people in the Bible, including Christ and all His disciples. ‘**Diakonos**’ is also used of men holding the office of deacon, meaning they serve the congregation, under the oversight of the elders.

Besides exemplifying deacons' work, **Acts 6:1-6** gives us an example of the selection process. The apostles gave the qualifications of deacons to the congregation, and asked the people to select men who met the qualifications. Then at a later date, the apostles appointed them. Exact details of the process are not given in Scripture, so each congregation must establish an expedient process to accomplish the selection and ordination of deacons.

In **1 Timothy 3:8**, Paul transitions from talking about the qualifications of elders, to talking about those for deacons by saying, **'Likewise deacons must be.'** This tells us that the qualifications for deacons must be taken just as seriously as those for an elder, and that the men who serve as deacons must already possess these characteristics.

Like elders, men must be tested before serving as deacons and if they prove to be qualified, they may be ordained, **1 Timothy 3:10** **'They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.'** The way we test them is to see whether they meet the qualifications in the Bible, **1 Timothy 3:8-13**. Men qualified to serve as deacons have moral and spiritual integrity, a trait all Christians should possess, **1 Timothy 3:8-10**.

### The qualifications of deacons

The only passage that mentions the qualifications for deacons is **1 Timothy 3:8–13**. In this passage, Paul gives an official but not exhaustive list of the requirements for deacons. The similarities of the qualifications for deacons and elders in **1 Timothy 3** are striking. Like the qualifications for elders, a deacon must not be an addict **1 Timothy 3:3**, not greedy for dishonest gain, **1 Timothy 3:3**, blameless, **1 Timothy 3:2 / Titus 1:6**, the husband of one wife, **1 Timothy 3:2**, and an able manager of his children and household, **1 Timothy 3:4+5**.

Furthermore, the focus of the qualifications is the moral character of the person who is to fill the office, a deacon must be mature and above reproach. The main difference between an elder and a deacon is a difference of gifts and calling, not character.

Paul identifies nine qualifications for deacons in **1 Timothy 3:8-12** **'Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.'** ESV

**1 Timothy 3:8**. **'Dignified'** in Greek is the word, **'kosmios'**. **Kosmios** means respectable, orderly, well behaved, always considerate. This is closely related to respectable, which is given as a qualification for elders, **1 Timothy 3:2**.

**1 Timothy 3:8**. **'Not double-tongued'** in Greek are the words, **'me dilogos'** and means telling a different story. Those who are double-tongued say one thing to certain people but then say something else to others, or say one thing but mean another. They are two-faced and insincere, their words can't be trusted, so they lack credibility.

**1 Timothy 3:8**. **'Not addicted to much wine'** in Greek are the words, **'me prosecho polus oinos'**. A man is disqualified for the office of deacon if he is addicted to wine or other strong drink. Such a person lacks self-control and is undisciplined.

It's interesting that **1 Timothy 3:3** and **Titus 1:7** tells us that elders should stay clear of wine because of the behaviour that wine would lead to. But here the deacons are to be men who are not addicted to much wine. Whatever we think the difference means, we still know that drunkards will not even inherit the kingdom of heaven. **1 Corinthians 6:10**.

**Galatians 5:19-21** **'The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.'**

**1 Timothy 3:8**. **'Not greedy for dishonest gain'** in Greek are the words, **'me aischrokerdes'** and means to gain something disgracefully. If a person is a lover of money, he is not qualified to be a deacon, especially since deacons often handle financial matters for the church.

**1 Timothy 3:9**. **'Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience'** in Greek are the words, **'echo musterion pistis en katharos suneidesis'**. The phrase **'the mystery of the faith'** is simply one-way Paul speaks of the Gospel, **1 Timothy 3:16**. Consequently, this statement refers to the need for deacons to hold firm to the true Gospel without wavering.

Yet this qualification doesn't merely involve one's beliefs, for he must also hold these beliefs 'with a clear conscience.' That is, the behaviour of a deacon must be consistent with his beliefs.

1 Timothy 3:10. 'Blameless' in Greek is the word, 'anegkletos' which means free from accusation. Elders require this qualification too, 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6. Anegkletos means subject to blame, it doesn't mean they have to be sinless but someone who is seen to be righteous.

1 Peter 5:3 'Being examples to the flock'. Those who are leading spiritual lives. Philippians 3:6 'As for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, blameless'. What about past sins? 2 Corinthians 5:17 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!'

Deacons are to be tested, in other words, is there anything to worry about? Although Paul doesn't specify what type of testing is to take place, at a minimum, the candidate's personal background, reputation, and theological positions should be examined. Moreover, the congregation shouldn't only examine a potential deacon's moral, spiritual, and doctrinal maturity, but should also consider the person's track record of service in the church.

1 Timothy 3:12. 'The husband of one wife'. This is the same requirement for elders, 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6. Obviously, a deacon has to be a male otherwise the text would say the wife of one husband and he needs to be faithful to his wife, in other words not cheat etc. There are some ideas about husband of one wife. Some people believe that this means that the man can only have been married once, and so someone who has been divorced or his wife has died wouldn't qualify. But we need to remember not to put words in Paul's mouth because the text doesn't say that.

If a man has been divorced through no fault of his own and then remarries, why should he be disqualified from being a deacon, if he wasn't responsible for the marriage break up? Or if his wife dies, does this then disqualify from being or continuing to be a deacon?

If divorce is legal and dissolves the marriage so that the one divorced can marry another, or his wife dies and he marries another woman is the one remarried considered now to be 'the husband of one wife'? It seems evident that legally such a remarried person is the husband of only one wife. He isn't considered to have two wives.

I believe this is speaking about a man who isn't a 'polygamist', someone who has many wives, after all this was the practice of many in New Testament times. The text doesn't say that the man only has to have been married once but it does say that he has to have only one wife. Remember it's all about having the experience of a marriage.

We should always try to get to the highest ideal, someone who hasn't been divorced, but we must never forget that what we did 'before' we were Christians or 'during' our Christian walk has been forgiven and we should also remember that circumstances change in all our lives which may well be out of our control.

Polygamy, Bigamy, and 'the husband of one wife'. A number of writers have concluded that the phrase 'the husband of one wife' means that the man in view isn't a bigamist or polygamist, but is married to 'only' one wife. They stress that the force of the instruction lies on the concept of 'only' one and not multiple wives.

It would seem prudent to argue, then, that the phrase isn't inserted solely to exclude polygamists or bigamists from being deacons. To clarify, however, the condition would exclude polygamists, but would carry as much positive force for a man to be married to one wife as it would negative force not to have more than one. As McGarvey stated: 'That he should be the husband of one wife, forbids having less than one as clearly as it forbids having more than one' (p. 56).

Only one wife his whole life? We have established, then, that the candidate for serving as a deacon must be a man who is literally 'the husband of one wife.' Our work isn't done, however, because questions still remain concerning the qualification.

Does 'the husband of one wife' mean that the candidate must currently be married to the only wife that he has had his entire life? If his wife dies and he remains single, is he still the 'husband of one wife,' since he was only married to one woman in his life? Or, if his wife dies and he remarries is he no longer the 'husband of one wife,' since he has now been married twice to two different women?

First, let us state that the most ideal situation is one in which a man has been married to one woman for his whole life and they are still together during the time of his deacon role. This situation would meet every conceivable challenge of the phrase **‘the husband of one wife.’** Of course, stating the ideal doesn’t exclude other possibilities that might be less than ideal but still potentially viable.

Let’s then deal with the situation in which a man has been married, his spouse has died, and he is currently in his second marriage. **Is this man a candidate for serving as a deacon?** Those who suggest that he isn’t, often refer to **1 Timothy 5:9** where Paul discussed widows who were to be **‘taken into the number’** of the church. In that **verse**, Paul stated that only a widow who **‘has been the wife of one man’** should be taken in.

In light of this, some believe that having only been married to one person in one’s life has some type of spiritual significance, or at least offers a person some type of life circumstance that would be desirable for one who is a deacon. Such an understanding seems to leave something to be desired based on the actual wording of **1 Timothy 3:2**.

The qualification in **1 Timothy 3:12** states that a bishop **‘must be’** in the present tense. The Greek words **‘dei’** and **‘eivai’** combine to form the **‘must’** and **‘be’** so that each of the qualifications is one that must at the present be a part of the potential elder’s life or character.

For instance, it would do no good to have a deacon who at one time was a drunkard, but is no longer such. Nor would it be good for a congregation to have a deacon who in the past was able to rule his household well, but currently isn’t able to do so. Ironically, the present tense force is conspicuously absent from **1 Timothy 5:9**, and a widow couldn’t be taken into the number of the church if she was married to a man who was living, for she would not be a widow.

Yet the ideal for a deacon is for him to be currently married. Thus, it seems an unnatural and tenuous stretch to force the **‘parallel’** between **1 Timothy 3:12** and **1 Timothy 5:9** to mean that a deacon cannot be remarried after the death of a spouse.

As **Glasscock** wrote, **‘First Timothy 3:2 does not say ‘an elder must be married only once’ nor does it say, ‘an elder cannot remarry’ (140:247).** He further stated that if Paul had wanted to insist that an elder must be married to one woman his whole life, the inspired writer could have written, **‘having had only one wife.’** Since Paul didn’t make such a statement when it was in his power to do so, it goes beyond the bounds of the phrase **‘the husband of one wife’** to insist that it means **‘having had only one wife’ (140:247).** The same principle applies to deacons having one wife.

An understanding of the Biblical teaching of marriage adds weight to the idea that a man can be qualified for the service of deacon, even if he has been married after the death of a spouse. In **1 Corinthians 7:39**, Paul stated, **‘a wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives, but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.’** Marriage is a covenant that holds sway only as long as a person lives on this Earth in a physical, mortal body. Once a person’s spouse dies, he or she is no longer married to that person.

Jesus elucidated this fact in His discussion with the Sadducees. This particular Jewish sect didn’t believe in the resurrection of the soul. In order to trap Jesus, the Sadducees concocted a situation which they thought rendered the idea of the resurrection absurd. They presented to Jesus the situation in which a woman married a man, he died, so she married his brother. Subsequently, his brother died, and she married the third brother.

Eventually, she lived through seven marriages to seven brothers and finally died. The Sadducees then asked Jesus, **‘Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? For they all had her’.** **Matthew 22:23-28.** Jesus explained to the Sadducees that they didn’t understand the resurrection or the Scriptures. He stated that **‘in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven’.** **Matthew 22:30.** From Jesus’ teachings, we learn that a marriage contracted on Earth has no force in the resurrection.

Thus, a person who was married to one wife on Earth, when she dies, is no longer married to that person. While she was his wife in the past, she cannot rightly be called his wife now, since the covenant of marriage is over at the point of the death of a spouse.

**Glasscock** summarised this idea when he wrote, **‘surely no one seriously believes that if a man’s wife dies that he is still bound to her in marriage; thus, if he marries a second time, he still has only one wife, that is, he is truly still ‘the husband of one wife’ (140:247).**

As J. W. McGarvey stated, 'it may be well to add that one living wife is clearly meant, and that there is no allusion to the number of deceased wives a man may have had. If my wife is dead, I am not now her husband' (1950, p. 57).

Therefore, if a man's wife dies and he becomes a widower, the present tense force of being the 'husband of one wife' would seem to exclude him from being qualified for the eldership. We must be careful to insist that such a situation doesn't make him any less of a Christian, any less spiritual, or any less valuable to the Lord's cause. It simply is the case that a circumstance in his life has arisen that renders him no longer qualified to serve as an elder at a particular time.

On the other hand, if a widower were to remarry after the death of his wife, and the woman he remarried met the qualifications detailed for the wives of elders. **1 Timothy 3:11**, the present tense force of being the 'husband of one wife' would allow him to be considered for the eldership.

**Can a man who has been divorced and remarried be a deacon?** If a man who loses his spouse to death and remarries can be considered for serving as a deacon, the natural question arises, **what about a man who is divorced and remarried?** If the phrase 'the husband of one wife,' doesn't mean 'having been married only once in his life,' that would seem to admit the possibility that a man who has been divorced and is remarried to 'one wife' could be eligible.

Before delving into this, let's restate the ideal. The perfect situation is one in which there is a man who has been married once to the same woman and she is living during the time he serves as a deacon. **Is it possible, however, that a divorced man who is remarried may still be a deacon?**

If a man can be married to a second wife, because he divorced his first wife scripturally, and not be considered by God to be committing adultery, then it follows that God must view the first marriage as dissolved and the covenant broken. Therefore, it would still be the case that a man who divorced his wife scripturally and married another woman would or could be 'the husband of one wife.' It would appear logical that a man's condition upon the death of a wife, or due to a scriptural divorce, would be the same, and a subsequent marriage wouldn't disqualify him from being the 'husband of one wife.'

**Like or unlike the other qualifications?** To me, the really central question is this, **is the 'husband of one wife' qualification a reference only to the present or does it stretch back to the remote past, including the pre-Christian past?**

I think the presumption should be that this question would be fundamentally like, as opposed to unlike, all the other qualifications listed, since the text doesn't set it apart as being essentially different. And all the other qualifications, I think, of necessity apply to the present, which inevitably includes the recent past, not to the distant past.

**Do we believe 'husband of one wife' means he must always, even as an unbeliever, have had no more than a total of one wife in his lifetime? If so, then wouldn't we need to also extend the same understanding to the other qualifications so they include his distant or pre-Christian past?** Let's test it, adding that same interpretive phrase to all the other qualifications, and see what it would mean. This would mean that any deacon must:

Have always, even as an unbeliever, been dignified. Have always, even as an unbeliever, never been double-tongued. Have always, even as an unbeliever, never been addicted to much wine. Have always, even as an unbeliever, not been greedy for dishonest gain. Have always, even as an unbeliever, managed his household well. This would make no sense.

**Don't we agree that a man can be a deacon who once was a drunk, a murderer, a violent man, lacked self-control, etc.?** Of course, we believe he must have demonstrated clear change, and this change, by implication, must have been borne out over a significant period of time.

In the same sense that an elder shouldn't be a recent convert, no matter how genuine his conversion, so he shouldn't be, regardless of how long he's been a Christian, a recently, transformed drunkard, murderer, fornicator, etc. no matter how genuine his transformation.

**1 Timothy 3:11. 'Likewise'.** The qualifications for the wife are very similar to those of her husband. The qualifications of the deacon's wife need to be considered as seriously as those of her husband.

A man cannot take on the task of serving as a deacon without the support and encouragement of his wife and family. The deacon's wife must also meet qualifications, which enable her to help her husband rather than hinder him. According to Paul, deacons' wives must **'be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things'**.

**1 Timothy 3:11 / 1 Timothy 3:8.** 'Dignified' in Greek is the word, **'kosmios'**. **Kosmios** means respectable, orderly, well behaved, always considerate. This is closely related to respectable, which is given as a qualification for elders, **1 Timothy 3:2**. She must be a woman who conducts herself in a manner that is worthy of respect and honour.

**1 Timothy 3:11.** **'Not slanderers'** in Greek are the words, **'Me Diabolos'**. This means not gossips or false accusers. No form of slandering is pleasing to God. Wives of deacons, as well as all Christians, must be able to control their tongue and not be busybodies or tale-bearers of idle gossip. Backbiters and talebearers are dangerous both to themselves and to the church.

Because of his work, a deacon can become aware of matters that need to be concealed. If his wife has trouble keeping her mouth shut, and even worse, blowing things out of proportion, she will be a hindrance to her husband, the elders, and the entire church. They're not malicious gossips and slanderous. Gossips habitually reveal personal or sensational facts to hurt others. Slanderers utter false charges or misrepresentations, to defame and malign others. A wife who gossips and slanders isn't only sinning, but hurting her husband and his work.

**Proverbs 18:8** **'The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts'**.

**Proverbs 26:20** **'Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip, a quarrel dies down'**.

**1 Timothy 3:11.** **'Sober minded'** in Greek is the word, **'Nephalios'**. This means temperate, vigilant, and sober. Someone who is trustworthy. On an even keel. This word means the same as with reference to the elders and deacons. The wives of these men must be temperate, self-controlled, and self-possessed. They must **'hold themselves in'** and not be frivolous and irresponsible. **1 Peter 1:13** **'Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.'**

**1 Peter 4:7** **'The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.'** A lack of soberness on the part of the wives will be a bad influence upon their husbands, their children, and their congregation. She must be able to make good judgments and mustn't be involved in things that might hinder such judgment.

She has a well-balanced life. She abstains from those things that would be harmful and uses those things that are good in moderation. She practices self-control and self-restraint. Rather than gossiping and slandering, deacon's wives are temperate and sober. They're in full control of themselves.

**1 Timothy 3:11.** **'Faithful in all things'** in Greek is the word, **'Pistos'**, this means trustworthy or faithful. The wives of deacons must be faithful to God in all relations as a Christian. She must be faithful in worship, faithful in Christian living, faithful to her husband, faithful to her children and faithful to all others in the church. A faithful wife can be a great blessing to a deacon.

A deacon's wife must learn to share her husband with the duties of his work. Her willingness to serve will help him with his willingness to serve. Also notice that every qualification actually applies to all Christian women seeking to achieve her role in God's plan. **1 Timothy 5:10** is a general requirement which functions similarly to the requirement for elders to be **'above reproach'**, **1 Timothy 3:2** and **Titus 1:6** and for deacons to be **'blameless'**. **1 Timothy 3:10**.

**Ephesians 5:22-24** **'Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.'**

**1 Timothy 3:12.** **'Managing their children and their own households well.'** **'Epimeleomai'** means manage, rule or in charge. A deacon must be the spiritual leader of his wife and children. **Ephesians 5:25-28** **'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.'**

Ephesians 6:1-3 ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise— ‘so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’

Remember the use of the word children means it’s not a matter of age, it’s a matter of character. Proverbs 22:6 ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it’.

How many children does a deacon require? If I were to ask everyone in this room who has children to leave, who would go? Everyone who had either one child or a few children would go. So, it doesn’t matter if the man only has one child.

1 Timothy 3:13. A deacon’s reward. ‘For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.’ This means that they have confidence in the reward the Lord will give.

Matthew 23:11+12 ‘The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

### The responsibilities of deacons

Whereas the office of elder is often ignored in the modern church, the office of deacon is often misunderstood. Based on the New Testament, the role of the deacon is mainly to be a servant. The church needs deacons to provide logistical and material support so that the elders can focus on the Word of God and prayer.

The New Testament doesn’t provide much information concerning the role of deacons. The requirements given in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 focus on the deacon’s character and family life. There are, however, some clues as to the function of deacons when their requirements are compared with those of the elders. Although many of the qualifications are the same or very similar, there are some notable differences.

Perhaps the most noticeable distinction between elders and deacons is that deacons do not need to be ‘able to teach’ 1 Timothy 3:2. Deacons are called to ‘hold’ to the faith with a clear conscience, but they are not called to ‘teach’ that faith, 1 Timothy 3:9. This suggests that the deacons don’t have an official teaching role in the church.

Like elders, deacons must manage their house and children well, 1 Timothy 3:4 and 1 Timothy 3:12. But when referring to deacons, Paul omits the section where he compares managing one’s household to taking care of God’s church. 1 Timothy 3:5. The reason for this omission is most likely due to the fact that deacons aren’t given a ruling or leading position in the church, that function belongs to the elders.

Although Paul indicates that a person must be tested before he can hold the office of deacon, 1 Timothy 3:10, the requirement that he cannot be a new convert isn’t included. Paul notes that if an elder is a recent convert ‘he may become puffed up with conceit’, 1 Timothy 3:6. One implication concerning this distinction could be that those who hold the office of elder are more susceptible to pride because they possess leadership over the church. On the contrary, it’s not as likely for a deacon, who is in more of a servant role, to fall into this same sin.

Finally, the title ‘overseer’, 1 Timothy 3:2 implies general oversight over the spiritual well-being of the congregation, whereas the title ‘deacon’ implies one who has a service-oriented ministry.

Beyond what we can glean from these differences in qualifications, the Bible doesn’t clearly indicate the function of deacons. Yet based on the pattern established in Acts 6:1-6 with the apostles and the seven, it seems best to view deacons as servants who do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church. Just as the apostles delegated administrative responsibilities to the seven, so the elders are to delegate certain responsibilities to the deacons so that the elders can focus their efforts elsewhere. As a result, each local church is free to define the tasks of deacons based on their particular needs.

### Conclusion

A willingness to serve the congregation, while not specifically stated, I believe we can appreciate the fact that a man shouldn’t be appointed to serve as a deacon unless he’s willing and ready to do the work of a deacon. The ‘office’ of a deacon isn’t the position of a figurehead, it’s an opportunity for service.

Whereas the Bible charges elders with the tasks of teaching and leading the church, deacons' role is more service-oriented. That is, they are to care for the physical or temporal concerns of the church. By handling such matters, deacons free up the elders to focus on shepherding the spiritual needs of the congregation. Yet even though deacons aren't the congregation's spiritual leaders, their character is of utmost importance, which is why deacons should be examined and held to the Biblical qualifications laid down in **1 Timothy 3:8-11**.

These are all of the qualifications that the Holy Spirit sets forth for men who serve as deacons. We aren't to add to them nor take away from them. Neither are we to make allowances for one candidate while being unrealistically strict upon another. **1 Timothy 5:21** 'I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism.'

If a man is qualified, he should be appointed to serve. If he isn't qualified, he should remove his own name from consideration and work towards meeting the qualifications in the future.

So, let me ask you, **are we ready as a church to appoint deacons? Or is there something stopping us?**

It's Biblical that you participate in this decision and it's Biblical that we all share the responsibility of appointing deacons. And if we're happy to go ahead let me share with you how we're going to do this, remembering that there is no format in the Bible for appointing elders or deacons.

#### How are we going to go about appointing deacons?

1. Each Christian member will be given a piece of paper with the words '**deacon nominated**' on it.
2. After each nominated man has been named, we will go to the nominated men and ask if they '**desire**' the position.
3. If they do desire the position, the congregation will be given one week to object to someone who is nominated but it must be done '**in writing**' and will be confidential. **Note:** No one can object to a nominated man being a deacon just because they don't like them or the way they dress etc. it has to be a real '**legitimate Biblical reason**'.
4. If there is an objection, then we must talk to the nominated person about the objection in an effort to clear up any misunderstandings or concerns.
5. If there are no objections and the men are still willing to take on the responsibility of a deacon we can move forward.
6. On the Lord's Day we will publicly announce that we have been praying and have been studying deacons for a few weeks now. We've all nominated these men and they are happy to take on the responsibility of a deacon.
7. We will then ask the men to come to the front and stand, and ask them again if they are willing to accept according to the Scriptures the role of a deacon.
8. We will then ask the congregation to accept them by standing up.
9. We will have a prayer for our new deacons and the congregation to work with them within their roles.

#### Example of Deacons nominating Form

### **CHURCH OF CHRIST'S DEACON(S) NOMINATION FORM**

**'In the same way, deacons are to be.'** 1 Timothy 3:8

Please pray long and hard before nominating any brother or brothers you feel are qualified for the position of a deacon. Please read **1 Timothy 3:8-11** carefully, I've created below a summary of all the requirements in question form to help you choose wisely.

Please fill in the form attached, simply cut out around the dotted lines and hand it back to the person who gave you this form. He doesn't need the answers to your questions just the form with the nominated brother's name(s) on it. Thank you and God bless us all as we strive to please God.

**Please note** if you feel there is only one brother qualified simply write his name down on the form but if you have more than one brother in mind then simply write all their names on the form. Also, please be aware that you may nominate a brother(s) but the brother(s) you name may not desire the position of a deacon or he (they) may not be qualified nor does a named brother(s) mean they automatically are chosen to be a deacon.

**A quick summary of the requirements a deacon must possess.**

Does the brother or brothers you are thinking about meet the following requirements?  
Simply answer yes or no. Please remember this is simply to help you choose.

**Summary of a deacon's requirements.**

1. Is he 'respectable' and considerate of others in their behaviour \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is he 'double-tongued', someone who is two faced \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is he 'addicted' to alcohol \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is he 'greedy for dishonest gain' \_\_\_\_\_
5. Does he 'hold' onto the mystery of the faith, the teaching of Gospel \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is he 'tested', is his track record good \_\_\_\_\_
7. Is he 'blameless' in the sense of being free from accusation \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is he married to only 'one woman' \_\_\_\_\_
9. Is he a husband who is faithful and respectful to his wife \_\_\_\_\_
10. Is his wife a faithful Christian woman who loves and serves God as well as her family \_\_\_\_\_
11. Is his wife a faithful Christian woman who is 'dignified', respectful and considerate of others in their behaviour \_\_\_\_\_
12. Is his wife a faithful Christian woman who isn't 'a gossip' \_\_\_\_\_
13. Is his wife a faithful Christian woman who is 'sober-minded', some who can be trusted \_\_\_\_\_
14. Does he manage 'his household' well \_\_\_\_\_
15. Does he manage 'his children' well \_\_\_\_\_

**The congregation's responsibilities to the deacons.  
(These are only suggestions)**

1. We must recognise their roles and pray for them.
2. We must encourage them and their family.
3. We must make their servant role as easy as possible.
4. We must trust them.
5. We must correct them when they are wrong.
6. We must treat them all with equal respect and accountability.

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**DEACON(s) NOMINATION FORM**

Name of Deacon nominee \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Deacon nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Deacon nominee \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Deacon nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Deacon nominee \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Deacon nominee \_\_\_\_\_  
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