



Deacon Qualifications

The qualifications of a deacon are similar to those of a bishop/elder/pastor.

Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money,⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.¹⁰ They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons.¹¹ Wives, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything.¹² Deacons are to be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently.¹³ For those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. ([1 Timothy 3:8–13](#)).

The word translated “deacon” in this passage is a form of the same Greek word used in [Acts 6:2](#), so we know we are talking about the same office.

Paul identifies nine qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-12:

1. **Dignified (v. 8):** This term normally refers to something that is honorable, respectable, esteemed, or worthy, and is closely related to “respectable,” which is given as a qualification for elders (1 Tim. 3:2).
2. **Not double-tongued (v. 8):** 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 cannot be trusted, so they lack credibility.
3. **Not addicted to much wine (v. 8):** A deacon is disqualified for the office if he/she is addicted to wine or other strong drink. Such a person lacks self-control and is undisciplined.
4. **Not greedy for dishonest gain (v. 8):** If a person is a lover of money, he/she is not qualified to be a deacon, especially since deacons often handle financial matters for the church.



5. **Sound in faith and life (v. 9):** Paul also indicates that a deacon must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” The phrase “the mystery of the faith” is simply one way Paul speaks of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, this statement refers to the need for deacons to hold firm to the true gospel without wavering. Yet this qualification does not merely involve one’s beliefs, for he/she must also hold these beliefs “with a clear conscience.” That is, the behavior of a deacon must be consistent with his/her beliefs.
6. **Blameless (v. 10):** Paul writes that deacons must “be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (v. 10). “Blameless” is a general term referring to a person’s overall character. Although Paul does not 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 should not 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.
7. **Godly spouse (v. 11):** According to Paul, a deacon’s spouse must “be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (v. 11). Secondly, they must not be a slanderer or a person who goes around spreading gossip. A deacon’s spouse must also be sober-minded or temperate. That is, they must be able to make good judgments and must not be involved in things that might hinder such judgment. Finally, they must be “faithful in all things” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10). This is a general requirement which functions similarly to the requirement for elders to be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6) and for deacons to be “blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10).
8. **Husband of one wife (v. 12):** The best interpretation of this difficult phrase is to understand it as referring to the faithfulness of a husband/wife toward their spouse. That is, there must be no other man/woman in their life to whom they relate to in an intimate way either emotionally or physically.
9. **Manage children and household well (v. 12):** A deacon must be a spiritual leader of their family.

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