

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13

In the local church in Ephesus there was the problem of false teaching that was distracting the church from its mission of preaching the gospel and making disciples.

Paul writes to Timothy and the big message is... "Sort out the church for the sake of the gospel!"

The first way he is to do that is by fighting for the gospel – including silencing false teachers, leading the church in praying for all people, and teaching the church how to display the gospel.

The second way is by appointing appropriate leaders: Elders who are supported by Deacons.

Deacons are faithful servants who give themselves to caring for the needs of the body. Serving in some official capacity.

The key aspect of the ministry of deacons is to free the elders of some of the practical burdens they are carrying so that they can focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer.

It seems like deacons were appointed once the work got too much for the elders.

The duties of deacons will vary according to the needs of local churches and their elders (might include leading singing, keeping records of offering, practical care, co-ordinating various ministries).

The qualifications for deacons are nearly identical to those of elders – but without teaching requirement.

"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. 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." (v8-13)

### A. The Reputation of Deacons

1. They are known for keeping their word.

They can be trusted to follow through on what they have committed to do.

2. They are good witnesses for Christ.

Life – use of alcohol, use of money.

Doctrine – sound in the faith; motivation for service is in response to the gospel.

3. They have proved themselves over time.

They are probably already serving in some way in the area they are asked to lead.

4. APP: It should be obvious to us as elders which members can be trusted to take on some of our burdens.

### B. Female Deacons?

1. Wives is better translated as 'women' – which women?

Women who assist deacons.

Women who are wives of deacons.

Women who are deacons.

2. I think this refers to female deacons.

Being a deacon is not a teaching/leading with authority position.

3. The qualifications that follow address particular sins which women and then men are more vulnerable to.

Female Deacons must not be prone to the sins of the tongue and to emotionalism – they should also be faithful especially in their roles as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters etc.

Male Deacons must be faithful in their marriages and take responsibility as head of the home.

4. APP: We need to recognise that there will be some areas of service in church life where women will be better suited to take the lead in serving.

### **C. The Rewards for Deacons**

1. Deacons who serve well will be rewarded in two ways:

A good standing – more influence in the local church that leads to more opportunities and more effective service.

A great confidence – that they are one of Jesus' followers (they are like Christ who is the model deacon) that enables them to serve with greater boldness.

### **D. Do we need deacons?**

1. Yes

We need people to serve and take the lead in serving in many areas of church life in order to free us up for our responsibilities as elders.

We have people who are fulfilling deacon roles without being called deacons or deaconesses – one of our problems is that many of those people are called 'elders'.

2. No

I'm not sure we need 'official' deacons as of yet.

Without a building we don't have many of the practical aspects of church life where deacons are required.

The issue of female deacons is a potentially divisive issue and so for the sake of unity we can release women to serve in deacon ways without causing unnecessary offense.

Official deacons would require a stricter assessment of qualifications according to 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

3. A way forward

If 'official' deacons are required in the future I would expect them to be appointed to do a specific task for as long as that task was required.

Deacon positions would vary from year to year with some being retired and new ones being introduced.

Unless there was a specific project which required the involvement of two or more deacons I would not expect there to be deacon meetings like there are elders meetings.