

# THE SUMMIT'S VIEW OF THE BIBLE'S TEACHINGS ON DEACONS AND THOSE WHO ARE TO BE LEAD SERVANTS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

## OUR VIEW OF THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON

**We believe that the Word of God teaches that deacons are to be the lead servants in the local body serving under the leadership of the elder/pastor team.**

- ☞ They guide and direct the ministry of the body to the members of the body and to the community of unbelievers they touch.
- ☞ The main focus is to lead a specific ministry or facilitate the body meeting a need within the body or community at large.
- ☞ They serve under the oversight of the elders and take on various ministries so the elders can carry out their main functions of teaching, praying, and shepherding the body.

### **I. Deacon at the Summit**

#### **A. Under Elder Oversight**

The early church clearly had two offices – the elder (lit. - bishop or ruler) and the deacon (lit. - servant). Their names described their function. The elder servant rules all the church, while the deacons serve as leaders under the elders. (*Acts 6:3, Philippians 11*)

#### **B. How does one become a deacon at the Summit?**

- 1) Names are given to the elders and the staff for consideration. The staff, elders, and their small group leader affirm all potential deacons before the process continues.
- 2) The person must meet the requirements of I Timothy 3:8-13 as evidenced by their life and the testimony of those in the body (family, friends, and leadership).
- 3) Potential deacons will be approached by their ministry leader and asked to be a deacon in their ministry. This sheet on “Deacons at the Summit” will be reviewed together so they understand what they are being asked to be do.

#### **C. What Are We Asking You to Do as a Deacon?**

##### **1) We are asking you to continue to pursue a life of gospel brokenness.**

You are being asked to be a deacon because you already exhibit this in your life (I Timothy 3:8-13)

##### **2) We are asking you to pursue gospel community in the body through a small group.**

Ongoing gospel transformation is impossible without a community of believers. We facilitate that through small groups and need your life as a model in a group affecting others and being affected by others. We realize there are times it will be impossible to be in a , so we are asking you to “pursue” gospel community at all times in this body.

##### **3) We are asking you to allow us the privilege of training you to be a deacon.**

This will involve a one time church wide event [this January, 29th] and training specific to the ministry you are in by your leader.

##### **Specific training from each ministry will include:**

- 1) Expectations
- 2) Leadership Specific Training
- 3) Discipling Others

## **II. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS**

### **A. Qualified Servants**

Deacons must be qualified according to I Timothy 3:8-13 to lead in this way. They must be respectable in their lives, not liars or deceitful, not drunks, not consume with money and how to obtain it at any cost, and they must know Christ and how to live and communicate the gospel. Their lives in word and action must match that whom they represent. Their goal is not perfection but a pursuit of Christ-likeness. “blameless” (not without sin – but their life is known for godliness and not these other ungodly character traits)

## B. Proven Servants

According to I Timothy 3:10, deacons are people who have proven that they are servants. They do not wish a title or prestige, they wish to serve and lead others to serve. In addition, their life has proven they seek to know the glory of Christ and make Him known. They have proven this over time.

## C. Male and Female Servants?

**After an exhaustive study of the scripture, prayer, and wise-counsel, we believe that there is Biblical and historical precedence for women deacons who serve alongside and under male eldership. The case biblically can be seen for both view points. However, in no way can one exclude women from this office based on the Biblical text. Historically, many early churches in the historical data of the time had women as deacons. Below you will see the evidence in the scripture to support the view that women can be qualified to be deacons in the local church.**

1) (I Timothy 3:11) The word “wives” is *gunē* (γυνή), “a woman.” The word when used in reference to the marriage relation, means “a wife.” Here, it should be translated “women.” It does not necessarily refer to the wives of the deacons, and for the following reasons: *first*, the words, “even so,” are the translation of *hōsautōs* (ὡσαυτως), which is used in introducing a second or third in a series. The series here is of Church officials; *second*, there is no possessive pronoun in the Greek, which would be needed if the women were the wives of the deacons; *third*, the four qualifications which follow correspond, with appropriate variations, to the first four required of deacons as regards demeanor, government of the tongue, use of wine, and trustworthiness; and *fourth*, this is a section dealing wholly with Church officials. The reference here is to women who hold the office of deaconess, as Phoebe (Rom. 16:1). Who are these *gynaikas* Paul addressed? They were almost certainly not the women of the congregation generally. They were most likely either the wives of the deacons or a group of female deacons (cf. Phoebe, Rom. 16:1). A case can be made for either of these two options, with a slim advantage falling to the first. But being dogmatic about either view is unwarranted by the exegetical data.<sup>1</sup> Some students think that 1 Timothy 3:11 refers, not to the wives of deacons, but to another order of ministers—the deaconesses. Many churches do have deaconesses who assist with the women’s work, in baptisms, in fellowship times, etc. Phoebe was a deaconess from the church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1, where the word is *diakonon*). Perhaps in some of the churches, the wives of the deacons did serve as deaconesses. We thank God for the ministry of godly women in the local church, whether they hold offices or not! It is not necessary to hold an office to have a ministry or exercise a gift.<sup>2</sup>

2) The word “dignified” is the translation of *semnos* (σεμνος), the same word used of the deacons (v. 8). It speaks of that combination of gravity and dignity which invites the reverence of others.

3) The word “slanderers” is *diabolos* (διαβολος), the word used of the devil. The word comes from *diaballō* (διαβαλλω), which means “to throw over or across, to traduce, calumniate, slander, accuse, defame.”

4) “Sober-minded” is *nēphalion* (νηφαλιον), the same word that is used in connection with a bishop (v. 2). It means, “to be calm, dispassionate, circumspect.”

5) “Faithful” is *pistos* (πιστος), “faithful” in the sense of fidelity, of being true to the trust imposed in one.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps as the care taker of alms or gifts to the poor (Ellicott) the deaconesses had special temptations.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. What about those who have been divorced?

Biblically, we feel that “the husband of one wife” (I Timothy 3:12) refers to polygamy (more than one wife at a time). Although not common, it was practiced in the Jewish and Gentile world. Below is a thought out explanation of the Biblical evidence. Bottom line – God is a God of grace that seems to deal with present qualifications and future actions, not past sins. If that is the case, no one would be qualified. Therefore, we will examine each candidate individually based on their ability to measure up to the Biblical qualifications and the qualifications the Summit holds on its Deacon / Leadership Covenant.

<sup>1</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (1 Ti 3:8). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup>Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (1 Ti 3:10-11). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

<sup>4</sup>Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (1 Ti 3:11). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

“The qualification “the husband of one wife” (I Timothy 3:12) has been understood in different ways. Some people have thought that it excludes from the office of elder men who have been divorced and have then married someone else, since they have then been the husband of two wives. But this does not seem to be a correct understanding of these verses. A better interpretation is that Paul was prohibiting a polygamist (a man who *presently* has more than one wife) from being a deacon. Several reasons support this view:

- 1) All the other qualifications listed by Paul refer to a man’s *present status*, not his entire past life. If we made these qualifications in 3:8-12 apply to one’s entire past life, then we would exclude from office almost everyone who lives.
- 2) Paul could have said “having been married only once” if he had wanted to, but he did not. The Greek expression for “having been married only once” would be *hapax gegamenmenos*, using the word “once” (*hapax*) plus a perfect participle, giving the sense, “having been married once and continuing in the state resulting from that marriage.” (Such a construction is found, for example, in Hebrews 10:2, and a similar construction is found in Hebrews 9:26.)
- 3) We should not prevent remarried widowers from being deacons, but that would be necessary if we take the phrase to mean “having been married only once.” The qualifications for deacons for men are all based on spiritual and moral character, and there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that a man who remarried after his wife died has lower moral or spiritual qualifications.
- 4) Polygamy was possible in the first century. Although it was not common, polygamy was practiced, especially among Jews. The Jewish historian Josephus says, “For it is an ancestral custom of ours to have several wives at the same time.” Rabbinic legislation also regulated polygamy.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gruden, Wayne (1994). *Systematic Theology*. Leicester, England. Inter-Varsity Press, Zondervan.