

A close-up photograph of a desk. On the left, a green cup is partially visible. In the center, a notebook with lined pages is open, and a black pen with a green barrel lies on the desk surface. The desk is covered with a green and brown striped fabric.

The Service of Deacons

1 Timothy 3:8–13

The Service of Deacons

- Definition: The English word “deacon” comes from the Old English (“diacon”) from Latin (“diaconus”) and ultimately from Greek (“diakonos”), which simply meant “servant.”
- In the NT, the word “servant” (or “deacon”) is used ...
 - in a secular sense of attendants (John 2:5, 9; cf. Rom 13:4),
 - in a spiritual sense of disciples (Matt 20:26; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 3:5, 6; 1 Tim 4:6; Eph 6:21),
 - but in a formal spiritual sense of deacons (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12).
- What, then, does the NT say of this last class of servants?

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- Ministry: The NT does not specifically indicate what deacons are to do within a local church, but it does indicate the following.
- The service of deacons is ...
 - underneath but connected to the eldership (1 Tim 3:1, 8; Phil 1:1),
 - a spiritual and needed work (1 Tim 3:8–13; cf. Acts 6:3),
 - but seemingly oriented toward the material necessities of the congregation, especially needy Christians (Acts 6:1–6; cf. 1 Tim 5:16).
- Since their ministry is vital to the spiritual work of the church, God expects deacons to meet certain qualifications.

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Our present deacons are active in the following works: benevolence, personal evangelism, worship and Bible class assignments, technology and social media maintenance, security, and more. They have indicated that we need additional deacons to do the work.

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- Qualifications: Just as elders must meet qualifications before they can oversee a church, so deacons must meet qualifications before they can serve in a church (1 Tim 3:8–12; cf. vv. 2–7).
- A deacon must demonstrate the following traits. He must be ...
 - respectable and blameless in character and understanding (vv. 8–10)
 - and capable of managing his own household, having a respectable wife and obedient children (vv. 11–12).
- A time of testing is necessary to determine whether a potential deacon is qualified (v. 10; cf. 2 Cor 8:22; 13:5; 1 Pet 1:7).

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- Reward: God rewards—now and in eternity—the deacon who serves well in his local congregation (1 Tim 3:13 = “obtain” [Gr. *peripoiomai*]; cf. Luke 17:33; Acts 20:28). The reward(s) is ...
 - “high standing” = probably either his reputation in the congregation or his reward in heaven (1 Tim 3:13)
 - and “great boldness in the faith” = probably the same as above but from the perspective of the deacon (1 Tim 3:13).
- Selection: If we use Acts 6:1–6 and 1 Tim 3:8–13 as our guide, we must (1) choose potential deacons from among ourselves, (2) test them according to Scripture, and then (3) appoint them to serve.

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