



For The Glory of God

Exemplary Servants

1 Timothy 3:8-13

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.gotquestions.org/deacons-church.html>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-did-deacons-do>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-quiet-and-crucial-work-of-deacons>

Sermon Outline:

1 Timothy 3:8-13

1. Deacons Exemplify Christian Service. Vv. 8a, 13
2. Deacons Exemplify Christian Character. Vv. 8-12

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Overseers and Deacons

8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,

9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.

11 Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.

13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. Who do you think about when you hear the word "servant"? How have good servants impacted your life?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Deacons Exemplify Christian Service. Vv. 8a, 13

2. What are the two biblical offices (or positions) given to the church? In what way are they similar and in what way are they distinct? Why is it important to have both of these offices present in the church and operating according to God's design?

3. What does the word "deacon" mean, and what does that tell us about the function of that role? What are some ways that Deacons practically serve the church, and why is it good for the church to have people officially set apart for that kind of service?

4. Are Deacons the only ones to be serving in the church? How should the rest of the church look to and consider the service of the Deacons?

5. In light of the example of Christ's service given in Philippians 2 and the character qualifications listed in this chapter, what does it mean to "serve well"? How does humble and faithful service bring respect and strengthen your faith?

II. Deacons Exemplify Christian Character. Vv. 8-12

6. How do these qualifications reveal a person's character? How would you describe the kind of character being described by these qualifications? Is there any real difference between these qualifications and what is expected of every Christian?

7. What does it mean to hold to the truths of the faith with a clear conscience? How does a person's private faith affect their public ministry, and why should we expect Deacons (and Pastors) to live out the fundamentals of the Christian faith?

8. Why is it important for a Deacon to be faithful to his wife and be a good manager of those living in his household? What is at stake when a Deacon's family life is not in proper biblical order?

9. It is important to note that the Bible gives the same standard of holiness and character to Deacons as it does to every other Christian. That standard is Christ (Ephesians 4:13), and scripture expects all Christians to pursue that standard. The Bible does, however, hold Deacons (and Pastors) to a higher level of accountability to that standard. What is the difference between a standard and accountability? Why is it important that Deacons (and Pastors) be held to a higher level of accountability to the standard of Christian living?

10. Why is it important to look for godly examples in the church? What are some practical ways we can learn from those godly examples?

1 Tim. 2:1–3:13 Descriptions of Gospel-Shaped Living. Having denounced the idle speculations of the false teachers, Paul turns to expounding in specific terms what true gospel living (1:5) should look like. He calls for prayer and he addresses hindrances to prayer (2:1–15), qualifications for overseers (3:1–7), and qualifications for deacons (3:8–13).

1 Tim. 3:8–13 Qualifications for Deacons. Along with elders (vv. 1–7), deacons are officers of the NT church (cf. Phil. 1:1). “Likewise” (1 Tim. 3:8) suggests a link between the lists of qualifications, and indeed there are striking similarities. Deacons, like overseers, are to exhibit lives shaped by the gospel. One key distinction is that deacons are not required to be able to teach. This list, like the one for the overseers, focuses on character rather than duties. The NT contains little explicit discussion of the role of deacons (unless Acts 6 is understood to refer to the installation of the first deacons; see note on Acts 6:6), but the Greek word *diakonos* means “servant,” so the office probably involved being responsible for various areas of service in the church.

1 Tim. 3:9 Mystery (Gk. *mystērion*) is a common Pauline word and refers here to the entire revealed content of God’s plan to bring salvation through Christ (see 1 Cor. 2:7; 4:1; 15:51; Eph. 3:4–13; Col. 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3). with a clear conscience. While deacons are not required to be able to teach, they are required to have a good grasp of the gospel, and their behavior is to be consistent with the gospel.

1 Tim. 3:10 Deacons should be tested, presumably under the leadership of the overseers.

1 Tim. 3:11 As the ESV footnote indicates, the Greek word for “wives” (*gynē*, here plural) can mean either “women” or “wives.” This ambiguity results in at least three interpretations. The text could refer to (1) the wives of deacons (their wives), (2) women deacons, or (3) women who assist the deacons (in some denominations called “deaconesses”) but who are distinct from the deacons. (The word “their” is not explicit in the Greek text but, according to the first interpretation, it represents the sense of the verse in the context of vv. 8–13.) These women appear abruptly in the flow of the text. A reference to the wives of deacons would make good sense, leading into the discussion of the deacon’s family in v. 12. However, the term likewise in similar cases often introduces a new group (e.g., 2:9; 3:8; Titus 2:3, 6). Also, the discussion of overseers lacked any reference to their wives. This would support understanding these women as deacons or assistants. Romans 16:1 refers to Phoebe as a “servant” or “deacon” or “deaconess” (Gk. *diakonos*; see ESV footnote); see note on Rom. 16:1. If the office of deacon is understood as involving church-wide teaching or

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

governing authority, then 1 Tim. 2:11–15 would not permit women to carry out these functions. The fact that teaching is not mentioned as a responsibility of the deacons would seem to indicate that this was not a role that Paul intended for deacons.

1 Tim. 3:12 husband of one wife. See notes on vv. 2–3, 4–5.

1 Tim. 3:13 Paul highlights the value and importance of deacons by stating two results of good service in this role: (1) good standing refers to respect and appreciation from the church to one who serves in this way; and (2) great confidence probably refers to the increase in confidence that comes from seeing the power of the gospel regularly proven in ministry.