

# Destin Church of Christ

## Fall, 2018

### Lessons from I & II Timothy and Titus

#### Lesson 9 – “Roles in the Church: Elders and Deacons” – Part 5

**Texts:** I Tim 3:8-13

Deacons are not mentioned at all in 2 Timothy and Titus. While the men in Acts 6 are not called “deacons,” forms of the word were used in reference to the work they were to do. It was the “daily distribution (*diakonia*)” (Acts 6:1), in which there was the need “to serve (*diakonein*) tables” (Acts 6:2). The term “deacon” means “servant.” It became the general word of “ministry” in the NT (1 Tim. 1:12; 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:5,11). Deacons are servants, not managers!

Deacons are not sub-elders or elders in training. Elders oversee, guide, and teach the members of the church. Deacons perform tasks in service to the church.

We will break down into five categories the qualifications of those who serve in the church:

#### I. Personal Character

**Respect:** (Verse 8) - “*Semnos*” means serious. It comes from a root verb “*sebomai*” which means “to respect or to worship”. This person has a stateliness about them that demands respect.

This person would not be a flippant person, not a silly person, not a frivolous person, not a person who makes light of very serious things, not a person engaged in trivia as a way of life, and not a person who is trite. They would be a person with dignity, a person who understands the seriousness of life.

**Sincere - Not Double-tongued:** This is the only place in the Scripture where this word (“*dilogos*”) appears, and simply means “two tongued”, a gossipy person. Because those who serve in the church are privy to very private matters, they are dealing with things that people would like to keep private.

**Not given (indulging) to much wine:** Elders are not to be “given to wine” (1 Timothy 3:3), while deacons are not to be “given to much wine” (1 Timothy 3:8). Does 1 Timothy 3:8 sanction moderate alcohol use?

In verse eight, the four words used to qualify deacons on this point (*me oino pollo prosechontas*) are literally translated “not wine much occupied with”. Does the use of the word “much” mean that deacons may drink a moderate amount of wine?

At least three alternative interpretations are possible:

1. When Solomon said, “Do not be overwicked.” (NIV) in Ecclesiastes 7:17, did he mean to imply that a person can, with God’s approval, be moderately wicked? One cannot assume that what is unlawful in excess is lawful in smaller amounts.
2. The terminology that Paul used was a loose form of speech. If Paul sanctioned the use of alcohol only on the qualifications that it was in small quantities, and that it was for medicinal purposes, why would he then sanction deacons drinking alcohol in larger amounts, avoiding only excess?

We can conclude that the term “much wine” must be a loose form of speech intended to express complete restraint in the use of wine.

3. The Greek word “oinos” is a generic term that includes all forms of the grape. The interpreter must examine the biblical context in order to determine whether fermented or unfermented liquid is intended.

The view that maintains that deacons may drink moderate amounts of alcoholic beverages is precarious, dangerous, and biblically unsubstantiated.

**“Not Pursuing dishonest gain”:** In those days, those who served in the church in an official capacity would be handling funds. They had to be people who were not motivated by money, and who were free from the love of it.

## II. Spiritual Life

**Must keep hold of the deep truth of faith:** He has to be a New Testament doctrinally oriented individual, who knows and understands the truth revealed in the new covenant.

**Holds the mystery of the faith:** The spiritual character of an individual who serves as a deacon begins with an affirmation of New Testament doctrine. He holds to the mystery of the faith.

Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. A conscience that's not accusing or not bringing on guilt.

## III. Christian Service

**Be Proved or tested:** Verse 10 - "Dokimazo" means “approved”. Let them continually be tested, and then, let them serve as a deacon.

*What test is this?* They are being tested at all times by the basis of their own service to Christ. It is an ongoing evaluation. The word "also" in verse 10 jumps back and makes application to the elders. It means that the elder would be tested as well.

## IV. Moral Purity

**Blameless:** Being blameless is not lower for a servant, the service is different. It is carrying out what the elders design. Go back to verses 2 and 3, and apply the list to the deacon. There's not only the moral purity of the heart but the moral purity of perception, which renders them without blame.

*"Well if a deacon is also to be blameless just like an elder, what's the difference?"* The difference is not in spiritual qualification, the difference is in function. The primary function of deacon's service is the carrying out, the personal application of the teaching being done by the overseers.

## V. Home Life

Verse 12 - They demonstrate their leadership just like the overseers do by how capably they handle their home. They are to manage the people, the children, and the possessions of their home, and be stewards of their funds. They are to show they have leadership ability.

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Verse 11 - "Women" is used in the NIV. "Wives" is used in the KJV.

Based on the Strong's Dictionary:

- γυνή - gune (goo-nay') - (G1135) - a woman
  - 1 Timothy 2:9-15 – "Woman" or "Women" (NIV)
  - Ephesians 5:22-33 – "Wife" or "Wives" (NIV)
  - 1 Timothy 3:2, 11 – Same word with two different translations (NIV)
- γυναικεῖος – gynaikeîos (goo-nahee-ki'-os) – (G1134) - wife

Are they the wives of the deacons, or are they just women who also serve in the church in a deacon capacity? If he was referencing to the wives of deacons, why would he isolate them, and not say anything at all about the wives of the overseers?

The use of "likewise" in verse 11 means we have a new category because it was used in verse 8 of a new category. I believe it means that the church is to recognize that there is a group of women who serve in the church.

*"Well why didn't he use the word 'deaconess'?"* There's no Greek word for that. If he had said "likewise deacons" and meant women, we never would have known he meant women because the word is not feminine. Some simply call them "women deacons".

In Romans 16:1-2, Phoebe is called a deacon. However:

1. The word “diakonos” simply means “servant” (Matthew 23:11; John 2:5, etc.).
2. The saints were encouraged to “assist” Phoebe, which did not imply her authority over them. (“paristerni” - “come to the aid of, help, stand by”).
3. The word “prostatis” (helper) does not necessitate oversight.

Euodia and Syntyche – (Philippians 4:2-3) – Paul calls these two women his “fellow-workers.”

Going back to verse 11, the qualifications of these “women” parallel those of the deacons in verse 8.

1. They are to have a sense of dignity and stateliness, and be respected.
2. They are to have control of their tongue, and not be slanderous.
3. They are to be sober minded...abstain from wine. It's used back in verse 2 of the overseer, and it's a parallel to verse 8 of the deacon. You can't be sober in your judgment if you're not sober physically.
4. They are to be faithful in all things. Absolutely trustworthy. Again, a parallel to verse 8. It says they're not to be greedy of filthy lucre.

Those four qualifications parallel the personal character qualifications of a deacon.

God has ordained in His church that the offices of elders and deacons be men. There is nothing dealt with here about women in that role. But, among the servers, there are men and women.

Verse 13 ... The word "standing" has come to mean “stepping up above everyone else.” It could be translated a pedestal or an elevated platform. When you serve well as a servant, you are put on a pedestal.

*"Isn't that sinful?"* Not if you didn't seek it. If you served in humility and submissiveness, you will be lifted up.

Two things come to the person who is a faithful server:

1. Respect by which he becomes the model that others emulate.
2. Confidence which has a snowballing effect, spinning you on to greater usefulness, greater effectiveness, and greater resource.

“Ministry Leader” – Someone who heads up a church "department" or ministry. A ministry leader can also carry the title of elder, deacon, or staff member.

Next Week: “Roles in the Church: Old & Young” and “Lessons to Servants & Rich”  
(I Tim 5:1-16; 6:1-10, 17-19; Titus 2:1-10)