

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 5

**...SERVE ONE
ANOTHER
WITH
WHATEVER
GIFT EACH OF
YOU HAS
RECEIVED.**



CHARACTER OF A DEACON

Scripture Text: 1 Timothy 3:8-15

What is the authority of a deacon? Is it to work independently of the elder? Is it to hear from God and make clear His will to the people? Is it to take the offering, serve the Lord's Supper, or paint the building? He certainly has no authority in deciding matters such as calling a preacher or an evangelist to hold meetings. An elected trustee board, constituted to legally hold in trust the real estate and business affairs of the church, should be Spirit-led, but it can never rightly fill the place of God-ordained, Spirit-led elders and bishops. A deacon must be a true Christian in every way. We can find the answer to these questions in the Scripture in our lesson.

MEMORY VERSE: *Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.*

—1 Timothy 3:8

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—Proverbs 16 Right use of speech.
- Tue.—Matthew 25:31-40 Service to needy.
- Wed.—Romans 16:1-16 Helpers in God's work.
- Thu.—1 Peter 3:10-16 Upright Christian living.
- Fri.—1 Peter 4:1-11 Serving God seriously.

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 12 God sets offices in church.

Personal Qualifications of a Deacon

1 Timothy 3:8-10 Likewise must the deacons—in the same way as the elders. (See Lesson 4.) The word *deacon* means a regularly constituted servant. Deacons serve in much the same way as elders, but in a secondary capacity. We might call them assistants to elders. They are to carry more of the material service such as providing for the needs of the sick and poor, while elders look more to the spiritual needs. Yet, their service is the same in many respects. Their character must be as holy as an elder's, a good example for all to follow. (1) **Must the deacons be grave**—thoughtful, serious-minded, realizing the importance and responsibility of their call? Both thoughts and actions should be suitable for the seriousness of the position. (2) **Not double-tongued**—not talking on both sides of a subject, two-faced, hypocritical. (3) **Not given to much wine**—no drinker of intoxicants. How can a person **given** to God be also **given to wine**—sold, bound, enslaved? **No man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24)**. (4) **Not greedy of filthy lucre**—not in it for financial gain. Money cannot satisfy, is perishable, and keeps one's eyes from the greater gain. **Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33)**. Needs left in God's hands, He will supply. (5) **Holding the mystery of the faith**—understanding and believing the doctrine of Christ, His deity, death, resurrection, and what these accomplish for sinners. **In a pure conscience**—free from guilt, forgiven, saved, justified, and holy. Not only must deacons believe Christ's doctrine, but they must experience it. (6) **Let these also first be proved**—a newly-saved, inexperienced, untrained one is not ready. Let him learn, gain experience and understanding, be **proved** or tried. When he shows himself worthy and capable, **let him use the office of a deacon, being found blameless**.

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His Family Life

1 Timothy 3:11 Even so—out of the same kind of holy life—**must their wives be**—if wives are to help their husbands in spiritual work, they must be (a) **grave**—serious-minded about their work. (b) **Not slanderers**—not gossips, talebearers, breeders of suspicion, or evil-tongued. There is nothing more devilish than an evil tongue. Is any sin more easily fallen into than careless talking? Does any do more harm? (c) **Sober**—calm, steady, self-controlled, not giddy or silly. (d) **Faithful in all things**—true to Jesus Christ, dependable, trustworthy, honest in all dealings, sincere, constant. A pastor's wife of this sort is a great asset to any congregation.

1 Timothy 3:12 (7) **Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife**—true to marriage vows, not a bigamist. (8) **Ruling their children and their own houses well**—requiring obedience, not cruel, not slack, loving, teaching, training and directing his children, taking the headship of the family as the husband and father should, and guiding it in well-ordered ways.

Paul's Purpose in Writing

1 Timothy 3:13 **They that have used the office of a deacon well**—have followed the stated rules and been faithful to God—**purchase to themselves a good degree**—earn honor with both God and men, establish a good record—**and great boldness in the faith**—By practice and experience become learned in the Scriptures, wise in spiritual matters, able in teaching or preaching, powerful in prayer, and convincing to men. What greater reward can one seek in this life? There is no greater!

1 Timothy 3:14-15 Paul hopes to see Timothy soon, but in case of delay, he sent this letter of advice as to how best to conduct himself, or the best action to take to set the church in order. He uses three terms to designate the church. (1) **The house of God**—the temple in which God dwells. (**Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5**.) These people in whom God lives are His church. (2) **The church of the living God**. (3) **The pillar and ground of the truth**. The truth is in both its foundation and its structure. The church grows out of the truth, and the church continues to lift and spread the truth. What a great responsibility the church has to hold high the truth that the world can see Christ, through Whom sinful souls are transformed into saints.

God's Perfect Plan of Church Government

The simple structure of the church as Christ set it up is perfect and entire, needing no addition or remodeling. He gives to each, gifts of the Spirit to carry on the work of the church. He sets elders and deacons to govern and direct the work. We find no higher human officers in the early church. These were led, taught, and guided by the Holy Spirit. There is no teaching in the Bible that men with superior authority should be set over the elders and congregations. (**Matthew 20:25-26**.) It was later when men, drifting from the Spirit's rule, set a bishop over elders, then an archbishop, and so on. The Pope of Rome was the first to take the title of Bishop of Bishops.

Deaconesses

In **Romans 16:1** the word **servant** applied to Phoebe is the same term as is translated *deacon* in our lesson. The word *deaconess* is not in the Bible. What would be the work and standing of such a servant?

JUST A THOUGHT

"He that is at war with others is not at peace with himself."

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.

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