

**Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 3:8-10** (NIV based)  
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Deacon - Eager To Serve

INTRO: Have you ever given any thought as to what is a deacon? Let's look at what God has to say about deacons.

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READ: 1 Timothy 3:8-10, with vv.12-13 to set additional tone of this passage

**BACKGROUND:**

- - In previous verses 2-7, God laid out the qualification requirements for "anyone who sets his heart on being an overseer" in a church or ministry. (v.1)
- - The main function of the overseer is to authoritatively manage the operating of a church or ministry while simultaneously being its spiritual leader. (vv.5,2)
- - God has determined that there is also a need for deacons in churches, which He next lays out the qualification requirements for in verses 8-13.

**v.8 - READ**

[Lesson Question: Compare the requirements for being an overseer in verses 2-7 with the requirements for being a deacon in verses 8-13 while including the definition of each job title name, and then construct a model of the job functions God intends for deacons. Next, develop a description of each character quality listed.]

SECTION POINT: A candidate for deacon must possess personal integrity.

- - In the same way as overseers, deacons are to "likewise" meet God's qualification requirements, which are similar or overlap in some areas with those of overseers, but the function of deacons is significantly different than that of overseers.
- - "Deacons" are to "serve", meaning they are responsible to do the physical work in the church or ministry. (Strong's #1249)
- - The deacons serve the church, its people, and its overseeing elders, providing physical assistance, help, and logistical support, with no ruling authority and instead being subservient under the oversight and authority of the overseeing elders.
- - The deacons minister in the sense of physically carrying out or administering in physical actions the decisions and policies of the church and the overseeing elders.
- - And notice that in the list of qualification requirements for deacons in verses 8-13, there are no requirements to be able to teach or preach or to be fully spiritually mature, meaning deacons are not responsible for or tasked to preach and teach the Word, confront the teaching of false doctrines, discern God's direction and directing, or extend spiritual maturity and leadership, which are all the functions of the overseers or elders.
- - Also, realize that even though the functioning of the overseers is different from the functioning of the deacons, both positions are important, needed, and designated by God, presumably in order to optimize the managing of a church for spiritual healthiness and logistical maintenance.

- - Logically then, some examples of the functions deacons would typically perform are: the setting up and cleaning up of events; being ushers, greeters, and parking lot attendants; making repairs to the facilities; cleaning of rooms and carpet; preparing and serving of food or meals or communion elements; moving of chairs and tables; mowing the grass; trimming trees and bushes; sweeping the floors and sidewalks; physically distributing benevolent supplies; collecting the offering; and etc.

**"worthy of respect"**

- - To be qualified as a deacon, the candidate must be "worthy of respect", always conducting himself in honorable and appropriate ways that merit and earn the respect of other people. (AHD - 'respect')

- - Furthermore, his demeanor and speaking also contribute to his "deserving and winning of honor and respect". (AHD - 'honorable', from Strong's #4586)

- - Among those people who have interacted with him, this candidate is recognized, distinguished, and appreciated as being honorable and always appropriate.

**"sincere"**

- - To be qualified as a deacon, the candidate must be "sincere", which in the Greek means not "double-tongued - not telling a different story". (Strong's #1351)

- - He does not shift his story or verbal account, and instead he is always genuine, honest, forthright, and truthful in everything he says.

- - Therefore, he has his speaking under control and is careful in everything he says.

**"not indulging in much wine"**

- - To be qualified as a deacon, the candidate must "not indulge in much wine" - not "addicted to, or occupied by, or held by, or applied to, or adhered to", or oriented to consuming much alcohol. (Strong's #4337)

- - Therefore, he is self-disciplined and is careful not to drink much alcohol.

**"not pursuing dishonest gain"**

- - To be qualified as a deacon, the candidate must "not pursue dishonest gain", not "craving wealth and resorting to ignoble and dishonest methods of getting it". (AMP)

- - He does not engage in "morally degraded", or greedy, or corrupt means of earning or managing his finances. (AHD - 'sordid', from Strong's #0146)

- - Therefore, he is careful to be appropriate and God-honoring with his finances, which thereby would include the management of finances by other members in his household because they too contribute to or affect his financial status.

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**v.9 - READ**

[Lesson Question: Describe the characteristics of this requirement in verse 9.]

SECTION POINT: A candidate for deacon must have some fundamental spiritual maturity in the faith.

- - To be qualified as a deacon, the candidate must "keep hold of the deep truths of the faith", securely possessing an adequate knowledge of the basic doctrines, principles, beliefs, and truths of the faith.
  - - He must have a firm working understanding of these basics of the faith, which are an undisclosed "mystery" to ungodly people. (Strong's #3466)
  - - And he must have demonstrated success at living in accordance with and in conformity to these basics of the faith, which is supported by his having a "clear, clean, and pure" conscience. (Strong's #2513; from *AHD* - 'conscience')
  - - Overall then, the candidate must have demonstrated that he is a genuine believer who is solidly grounded in the faith and consistently exhibiting "moral integrity, uprightness, and excellence" in his life. (*AHD* - 'probity', derived from Strong's # 4586 'worthy of respect' in v.8)
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#### v.10 - READ

[Lesson Question: Describe a practical way how this pretesting would be implemented in a church. And what character qualities and behaviors, both positive and negative, are being looked for within this pretesting?]

**SECTION POINT: A candidate for deacon must successfully pass pretesting before he can be approved to become a deacon.**

- - And to be qualified as a deacon, the candidate must first go through a period of testing.
  - - The candidate can and should help the existing designated deacons, unofficially but tangibly serving alongside the deacons as a form of hands-on involvement and exposure, in order to test and predetermine how he functions and conducts himself in the serving role that deacons are to fulfill.
  - - After a period of time serving alongside the deacons, the candidate and his performance should be reviewed, examined, investigated, analyzed, and critiqued for any deficiencies and/or inappropriate behaviors that would prevent him from being qualified to become a deacon.
  - - If "nothing is [found] against" the candidate and he is "without reproach" or "faultless in every respect", then he has demonstrated he is worthy to be "approved" as a deacon. (Strong's #0410, #1381; *AHD* - 'irreproachable')
  - - In a practical way, during the time of testing the candidate must successfully demonstrate that he has the heart, the motivation, the commitment, the energy, the willingness, the eagerness, the consistency, and the self-initiative to serve.
  - - He is not begrudging in his serving, waiting to be asked or prompted.
  - - He just pitches right in and helps, with eager accommodating compliance to those in authority, to not only accomplish and complete the logistical tasks that need to be done but to do them in the way and manner that the authoritative person wants them done.
  - - A deacon must be an eager server, possessing a disposition that enjoys serving with an accompanying equal eagerness to please.
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BIG IDEA: A candidate for deacon must have personal integrity, some fundamental spiritual maturity in the faith, and successfully pass a time of pretesting.

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#### IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

- - How does your church or ministry regard the position and functioning of deacons?
  - - Does your church adhere to or does it wander from the guidelines and requirements that God has established here?
  - - God presents this description about deacons because He wants churches and ministries to follow what He has ordained for deacons.
  - - Therefore, are there any areas that your church needs to make improvements on the selection process and the functions of deacons?
  
  - - For those of you who are not involved doing ministry, why not decide to start serving in a similar manner that we have been studying in this Bible passage for deacons?
  - - Ask around to find a ministry that needs some help, and then arrange with its leaders to start attending their meetings for the purpose of you serving in some logistical manner - setting up chairs, serving soda, picking up trash, sweeping the floor afterwards, and etc.
  - - And remember that your purpose for being there is to serve - not to stand around and socialize with the other workers, resulting in no serving getting done.
  - - Humble yourself and do the menial jobs while simultaneously working to improve your personal integrity and spiritual maturity, which will then move you towards being qualified to perhaps become a deacon one day.
  - - Serving in a ministry like the deacons do is a good way for you to start being involved in a church or ministry.
  - - And also you will be developing a heart like Jesus had, as declared in Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..."
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - From verses 3:2-13, how do the requirements for spiritual maturity compare between that of overseers and that of deacons?
  - - Hypothesize as to what negative circumstances or dynamics in churches are trying to be avoided by requiring pretesting of the candidate, as described in verse 10.
  - - What does the functioning of a ministry look like when there is no one to do the manual work? Theorize and describe some specifics and scenarios. Now are there any ministries in your church that match or resemble the scenario descriptions you just generated?]
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