

DEACON QUALIFIED ONE PAGER

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE DEACON QUALIFIED?

For many of the leadership roles at Veritas, we ask that someone filling that role be deacon qualified. Before we talk about what that means, we need to define what deacons are. Deacons are the foremost servants of the church who reflect the example of our Lord, who washed his disciples' feet and "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Russell Moore says, "Deacons give leadership to the serving of temporal needs [within the church]... They serve the Body by removing potential obstacles to unity by meeting human needs."

So if that's what deacons do, what does it mean to be deacon-qualified?

The qualifications for deacons are given in 1 Timothy 3, right after the qualifications for elders. 1 Timothy 3:8-13 says:

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. [9] They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:8-13 ESV)

To be deacon qualified means to meet the character qualifications listed here. Paul says that deacons are to be respectable, not gossips who speak out of both sides of their mouth, self-controlled, not lovers of money. They must understand the gospel clearly, and they must be the model servants of the church. They are to be marked by faithfulness to their family if they have one, because God's church is a family, and the immediate family is often the proving ground for serving in leadership in God's family.

The word in Greek for wives and women is the same word, so it is dependent on context to determine which is being used. We believe that Paul is speaking to women and not just deacon's wives here, opening up the office of deacon to both men and women. We believe this because there are no character qualifications given for elders' wives, and it doesn't seem like Paul would give qualifications to wives of deacons but not elders. A further example is Phoebe, who seems to be clearly recognized as a deaconess of the church of Cenchreae in Romans 16:1. So a more appropriate rendering of the text would read, 'Women, likewise'.

Overall, to be deacon qualified is to be a man or woman marked by a growing faith in Jesus, a clear grasp of the gospel, a heart to serve the church, and character that reflects the fact that you are following Jesus. Deacons are the chief servants of the church who reflect the example of our Lord, who washed his disciples' feet and "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

