

# The Difference In Deacons

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Let us suppose a congregation appointed elders for the first time in their history. Before the appointment the preacher expounded on the qualifications of bishops from Timothy and Titus for weeks. The church submitted names of those to be considered. These men were then asked if they were willing to serve. The names were next announced to the church and members were given the opportunity to object. Each objection was reviewed, discussed, and resolved. A man could have his name removed or go forward to being appointed with others. The entire process took months because the church was careful to not put men into the office who were unqualified and would do harm to the congregation with their new found power.

After only two elders were appointed the preacher presented one lesson on deacons. Ten names were quickly put forth and the men took the office with no objections. There was little care in these appointments. Did the church feel deacons were unimportant or had no power? Did they think if they did wrong the elders would take care of it, so they did not need to worry? Or was the problem simply they did not understand the significance of the deacons' role or qualifications?

The word "*deacon*" means "*an attendant*". The Greek word "*diakonos*" is also translated *minister* and *servant* in the Bible. In 1 Timothy we see we are not talking about regular servants but an **office** which is to be held only after certain requirements are met.

In Acts 6 seven men were appointed to take care of the daily distribution. Many Christians claim these men were the first deacons. This is not true. The qualifications were different.

These seven men could have been called the forerunners of deacons, but they were not deacons. From this text some suggest that deacons only took care of physical matters like waiting on tables, and they try to restrict the deacons in their church to physical duties. However, two of the seven, Stephen and Philip both went forth preaching and performing miracles as well. They did more than take care of physical duties.

1 Timothy 3 gives us the qualifications of these special servants. *8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the **office** of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the **office** of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

A number of the qualities of deacons and elders are identical: Male, Scripturally Married (2, 12), Parent (4-5, 12), Blameless (2, 10), Rules His Children Well (4-5, 12), and Not Greedy Of Filthy Lucre (3, 8). The KJV has the filthy lucre requirement in 1 Timothy 3, but it is not in some manuscripts. The qualification is listed in Titus 1:7 however. The wives who are mentioned in verse 11 refers to the wives of both elders and deacons in my judgment.

Other qualifications are similar but worded differently. Deacons are to be grave (honorable). Bishops are to be of good

behavior. Neither is to be given to wine (3, 8). Although deacons are not specifically told to be hospitable all Christians are told to practice this (Rom. 12:13, 1 Pet. 4:9). Both need to know the word of God (2, 9).

The difference between elders and deacons primarily is one of age. The word elder means older. He cannot be a novice in years or in his faith (6). His children must be faithful (Titus 1:6). Most contend this means his children have gotten old enough to obey the Gospel and have done so. Although the deacon's children must be under the control of their parents, they can be young enough to not obey the Gospel yet. Elders are also commanded to not be brawlers, strikers (3), or self willed (Titus 1:7). They must also be patient (3). The term "sober" means self controlled or of a sound mind (2). Many of these traits come with age and experience. Also, elders must have exercised these abilities long enough to have a good reputation without (7).

Do you think we are too cavalier in our appointment of deacons? **These men must first be proven!** They are given a notable responsibility. The elders could assign them to organize the teachers' schedule, maintain the baptistry, keep the treasury, or a variety of other tasks that require trustworthy individuals. These men cannot be lukewarm, irresponsible, uncaring Christians. Nor can they be *doubletongued*. The Greek term is "*dilogos*". "*Dis*" means twice. "*Logos*" means "word, what is said, or communication". It is interesting that "*Logos*" refers to **Jesus** (the Word) in John 1:1 and 14. The term "*slanderers*" in referring to the wives (11) is "*diabolous*" which is usually translated "**devil**" in the New Testament.

Elders and deacons are both spiritual minded men. The office of deacon should not be handed out lightly. These men are not put in to be janitors or plumbers of the building. We should use the same care in appointing men to the worthy office of deacon as we do for elders. God requires it.