

“Distinguished Deacons (Servants)” (1 Tim. 3:8-13)

1. Continuation (8-10)

- a. Segue #1: Redundancy here initially tempted my neglect but now I’m concerned about finishing. The echo of former prerequisites for official roles as overseers and now “servants” is prudent for the standard of righteous character persists for all roles in the church.
- b. Semantics: we must do our earnest to distinguish nuance and have intellectual integrity re: terms.
 - i. “Deacon” = servant and is used both as an office and in general terms. As distinguished by the text, deacons and overseers have not the same role. However, when I came here this church was led by the deacons out of necessity. And with patience, experience, and my growth in understanding my role etc., this church organically/spiritually, got back to being pastor (or “overseer”) led. I can more clearly see my duties and abilities whereas when I first arrived I was unable to fulfill such a role. Thank the church and thank God for His grace, patience, longsuffering, etc. to bring me up as a pastor in this church. We all have to begin somewhere and the deacons saw how I showed a quality of character and motive – and thus I could develop my gifts with experience. Again, these qualifiers are much more about the character than giftedness, although both are required. But the emphasis is majorly overloaded on character with a mere mention of ability to teach (v. 2) with regard to overseers. Furthermore, roles of deaconship are not defined, thus we must exercise grace in understanding of which some applications follow:
 1. Deacon of Grounds
 2. Deacon of Teaching
 3. Deacons of Administration
 4. Deacon of Visitation and so on.
 5. Many deacons have identically shared roles with Yokefellows unto smaller groups. We assigned volunteers early in 2020 as care group leaders who would make calls to assigned groups of parishioners so as to keep contact over the six weeks we didn’t assemble, and even afterward for a while to those not yet comfortable to rejoin.
 6. There is no defined ecclesiology nor liturgy and so each denomination or church must understand how best to operate in structure, office, ministry, and liturgy.
 - ii. Such double usage of a term is not unlike the Hebrew term *almah*, which is used of both virgin and young girl.
 - iii. 3 axioms of hermeneutics: 1. Context. 2. Context. 3. Context
 - iv. Subsequently, we will consider the double use of the term for woman/wife.
- c. Singular (8a-b) “reverence” is indispensable to servant leadership and the negative for “double-tongued” indicate a consistent character i.e. one who does as he says, contrasted to the double-tongued. E.g. ministers have recently communicated with their tongues to me that they are for the **Gospel**, *Word*, and Great Commission, yet their actions and preaching demonstrate “**another gospel**,” *eisegesis*, and shallow evangelism! Such were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear but doing an altogether different thing. I am absolutely convinced that this is a precise example of what Paul prohibited here. Such must be corrected or the double-tongued need to be removed.
- d. Sober (8c) sober mindedness requires the absence of drunkenness. Do all things with self-control. And if you can’t live without something, it has got hold of you. Drunkenness and

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- gluttony are sins but eating and having an occasional drink do not necessitate such as being sinful. Prov. 23:20-21.
- e. Selfless (8d) 1 Tim. 3:5c-10 cf. Titus 1:11. Motive is critical. False teachers are marked by (among other things) a love of money and ill-gotten gain. The servant leader in the church must be responsible re: money e.g. being responsible and prioritized with it – not being frivolous but a good steward and not being greedy but charitable. In short, having no personal agendas!
 - f. Studied (9)
 - i. W/o getting deep into the syntax of the phrase (as good commentaries do not avoid), we can avoid the technical academics and safely conclude the following as being part of the intent. Deacons need not have the same gift as overseers re: biblical study/knowledge. It doesn't seem to necessitate they must be equally adequate in the Word as pastors, or else what is the gift of teaching/preaching if all have it?
 - ii. It is thus not holding a gift of preaching, but the *learned* and *accessible* skill to competently share the Gospel, offer general biblical counsel, and demonstrate integrity of walk in their faith w/o a guilty conscience.
 - iii. Now all believers ought to learn such, but those who have yet to be disciplined in at least as much do not qualify as official deacons. Another point re: this verse. It is quite alarming that many overseers (illegitimate) are wrongly distorting the Word rather than rightly dividing it. What passes for a sermon these days is repugnant. And the silence re: uncomfortable and politically incorrect topics and even stances of affirmation for sinful lifestyles is the exact opposite of this verse! Those who practice such are not merely disqualified for overseers but as servants. And not only disqualified to serve but in many cases, condemned (see Gal. 1:6-10).
 - iv. Perhaps you could solidify the “mystery of the faith” by considering v. 16 – and then perhaps asking yourself re: the Gospel: Whose, what, when, where, why, and how.
 - g. Sturdy (10) these qualifications are to be proven in these servants' lives. What has not been tested cannot be trusted.
 - h. Segue #2 (11)
 - i. Who? Segue #1 was “Likewise” which meant deacons/servants be of the same character as overseers. Segue #2 is also “Likewise” re: official servant women or wives to be as the servant men. The term is used of both woman and wife. Determining which is best considering context of what →
 - ii. What? The instructions/qualifications are for specific offices. Why bother addressing “overseers” and “deacons” if such also generally applies to all women? Mostly, the earnest debate is over understanding the term to indicate wives of deacons or deacon women. Although English translations of Ro. 16:1 use the term deaconess, such was no Greek term but the same term used here. The feminine is used for obvious reasons, but meaning can be lost even with good intentions. Again, the term transliterated deacon means servant and the context determines if such is an official title of role or generically used as servant as describes all members in the Body of Christ. All are servants, including Phoebe, Timothy, Paul, and Jesus. However, all do not hold the office or role of deacon.
 - iii. Why? Why the feminine term is used here is obviously that women are included in such a role but in what respect? If wives is the correct interpretation, it is most likely their team efforts with their deacon husbands and thus not sharing the same role but

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being a helper to the deacon in his role. If “women” (not wife) is the accurate intent, the understanding would be them having the same role as male deacons.

- iv. How? How do these wives or women serve? Not to be over the men for sure. The clearest indication of said service is seen in Titus 2:3-4. Egalitarians maintain that women share equally in *all* roles of the Church, but I disagree. Complementarians, maintain that male and female have certain distinctive roles w/in the family and the Church. Such is indicated in the next verse. But before turning there, I’ll make mention the obvious consideration of debate re: Complementarians, namely, where is the distinctive line of delineation? Can such women/wives of this role (and to whom these qualifications apply), speak to the church as a whole or merely to the other women and children? It seems obvious that they cannot be the overseer, but is there prerogative for them to occasionally address groups including men? **See 1 Cor. 11:5 and 1 Tim. 2:12-15**

2. Foundation (12)

- a. Responsibility: Perhaps the most obvious sign of qualification is seen in a leader’s family. Although, there is biblical precedent for single overseers and deacons (including Paul himself), family men are predominantly the ones who occupy the role of overseer and it is no wonder. As the Church is vital to healthy society, the family is vital to the Church. And as the marriage is vital to the family, well modeled roles w/in the family are essential to harmony. No family, husband, wife, or child comes close to the perfect standard but reasonable qualifications must be demonstrated as a husband for the health of marriage, family, church, and society. If one is not competent or sufficient in such, how can he manage church matters (cf. v. 5).
- b. Redundancy: As for overseers, so for deacons:
 - i. Fidelity to monogamous marriage
 - ii. Loving discipline for children
 - iii. Overall noteworthy management of family, which requires discernment, humility, obedience, patience, self-controlled, etc.

3. Commendation (13)

- a. Reputation: It’s not that we serve to reach a status, but that we have a “good standing” i.e. display a good reputation for others to acknowledge, not unlike Mat. 5:16. “Boldness” is indicative of offense. Doug Wilson wrote, “A reformer does not walk onto the stage to polite applause.” Jesus could not have been clearer re: our opposition and persecution. The more accurately you present the Gospel, the more vehement the opposition. But would you rather have “good standing” with Jesus or the world?
- b. Resolve: Our discipline will produce resolve and “great boldness.” Courage is not innate. It can only develop out of conflict! As always Gordon Fee does a great job of keeping the whole of the letter in context and thus concludes: “The word for **great assurance** often conveys the sense of having boldness or openness toward others (cf. 2 Cor. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; Philem. 8; ...). But the word can also refer to one’s “confidence” before God, as in Ephesians 3:12 (cf. Heb. 10:19, 35). Hence the NIV translates **great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus**. This is not an easy decision. On the one hand, it would add a further dimension to what it means to have good standing, namely, the confidence in speech that comes from soundness in life and work. On the other hand, it could refer to the double nature of the “reward,” namely, a good reputation with other people and confidence before God. On the whole, the latter is to be preferred, because the qualifying prepositional phrase says “in **faith**”

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(not in *the* faith), implying, as throughout 1 Timothy, one’s own **faith in Christ**. These two commendations, of course, are precisely what the false teachers lack. Their “diseased teaching” (see disc. on 1:19), which includes improper behavior and a soiled reputation, also has caused them to abandon genuine faith in Christ (1:5).”¹

- c. Reward: A job well done is its own reward in many respects but mostly so regarding ministry. Mat. 10:8 conveys the reality that all we can give is reasonable service from, to, and for the One who liberated and equipped us. We could never repay our LORD...What is awesome, nevertheless, is His gracious rewards which await the faithful! The greatest honor one can receive is to hear “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mat. 25:23b).
- d. Recap: And thus is prerequisite for the leader in the local church. If the Church is going to advance in a hostile world (as sheep must among wolves), those in key positions must demonstrate: developing skills, trustworthy character, competence in the Scripture, and a resolve which endures persecution and advances the Gospel of Christ!

PC for part 1: We have a commission, and our provisions to complete it are found in the Body of Christ (the Church). If we are going to advance the Kingdom, our leaders must be competent and have character. It is amazing that God uses such common folk to lead His churches, yet it is expected that such common folk demonstrate fundamental criteria in the established roles of leadership. Perhaps it shouldn’t be amazing that such roles of leadership are fulfilled via serving. If it is amazing, it is because the world’s leadership has priorities of self-elevation; and the world has a more prevalent influence than the current Church. Yes, God does have commanding officers in His churches but even they are to demonstrate leadership by serving. Therefore, those in the office of “servant” (transliterated as “deacon”) obviously need to do the same. The higher the calling matches the greater the serving (see Mat. 20:25-28), as all should aim to be servants. Scripture’s command to be courageous with the hard truths while serving each other and our neighbors is not only for “overseers” and “deacons.” Do others see Christ in you?

PC for part 2: We have considered the qualifications for ‘overseers’ and then officially positioned ‘servants,’ and now we briefly consider a verse regarding women in a particular role – be it a deacon’s wife or something else acknowledged by Paul. There is a bit which is unclear about the term and syntax (original Greek word for “women” or “wives” and its placement in the sentence/paragraph), but there are clear boundaries and categories that are to be acknowledged (e.g. 1 Tim 2:12-15). Women have indispensable roles in society, family, marriage, and the Kingdom! And like men, they are to embrace their design and purpose so as to enjoy the liberty that God has provided for us. These qualifying principles are for all God’s people and if any man or woman desires to serve in an official Church capacity, they must acknowledge and adhere to such principles to the best of their earnest understanding and ability.

disc. discussion

¹ Fee, G. D. (2011). [*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*](#) (pp. 89–90). Baker Books.