

Fact Sheet for **“What do I want to be like?”**  
**1 Timothy 3:8-13**

Pastor Bob Singer  
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*What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you want to be your major in college? What kind of person do you want to marry?* These are questions we may often ask our children. But there are other questions we ask ourselves too. *Where do I want to go on vacation this year? What kind of car do I want to drive? What kind of house do I want?* When we get older we still ask these sorts of questions, but we begin to ask other questions. *When would we like to retire? What kind of legacy do we want to leave to our children and grandchildren? How can I stay healthy?* Questions like these are all about goals and aspirations. When we push ourselves to answer these questions it results in defined plans and determination. But we should not leave out of this mix questions like... *What do I want to be like? What are the character qualities I value?* A great way to look for answers to these types of questions is to look at God's qualifications for church leaders. Last week we looked at the qualifications for overseers/elders/pastors. Today we will consider those for deacons (and deaconesses).

**<sup>8</sup> ¶ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup> They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.**

Paul begins with six qualifications for deacons.

**1 – Dignified** – that which in a human being calls forth respect from others – honorable, of good character.

**2 – Not double-tongued** – speaking one thing and meaning another – hypocritical, insincere, deceitful.

**3 – Not addicted to much wine**

**4 – Not greedy for dishonest gain** – greedy for money, covetous. Some deacons apparently used their positions in the early church in a shameful way... to get rich. Think about the prosperity gospel today. This is also a qualification for elders (see 1 Peter 5:1-3).

**5 – Must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience** – A fine example of this is Stephen, the one who would be the first martyr of the church in Acts 7. The first mention of Stephen is in Acts 6, a passage often pointed to that describes the kind of roles deacons had in New Testament times. *By the way, our root word for deacon shows up three times in this Acts passage (verse 1 daily distribution, verse 2 serve tables, verse 4 ministry of the word).* When Luke refers to Stephen as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” this is very similar to Paul's words that deacons “must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”

In the next sentence Paul added his sixth qualification for deacons.

**<sup>10</sup> And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.**

**6 – Blameless** – irreproachable, held in high respect

Now Paul temporarily interrupts his discussion of male deacons with this single verse about women.

**<sup>11</sup> Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.**

“Their wives” actually translates one word that is translated alternately “wife” or “woman”, and at about a 50/50 frequency. This is how several major versions translate this word in this verse... “wives” (CSB, ESV, KJV, NKJV, NLT), “women” (NASB, NIV). Acts 5:14 is one clear example, among many, of this word being translated as “women”. My understanding is that 1 Timothy 3:11 is referring to female deacons, or deaconesses. One of the major reasons for this understanding is that if it were referring to deacon’s wives then why are there no qualifications earlier for the wives of overseers, the more stringent office? If however the office of overseer is open to men only this is quite understandable.

Here are the qualifications Paul lists for women in verse 11...

**A – Dignified** – This is the same word as for male deacons in verse 8... that which in a human being calls forth respect from others – honorable, of good character.

**B – Not slanderers**

**C – Sober-minded** – temperate in the use of alcoholic beverages, sober, clearheaded, self-controlled

**D – Faithful in all things**

As with many of our English words “faithful” can have different shades of meaning, depending on how it is used... 1. trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust or faith; 2. trusting, cherishing faith or trust, also believing, faithful. This secondary meaning is similar to verse 9 for deacons.

Now Paul returns to his discussion of male deacons with two more qualifications.

**<sup>12</sup> Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.**

**7 – The husband of one wife** – The requirement that deacons be “the husband of one wife”, or literally a “one woman man”, is the same requirement as that for overseer in verse 2. This clearly speaks of marital commitment, and there is a question as to whether it speaks of marital history or not. And it would follow that if verse 11 speaks about deaconesses, then they in the same way should be the wife of one husband.

**8 – Managing their children and their own households well** – This is a similar requirement as that for an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:4-5. As we have seen last week, this whole 1 Timothy passage calls for male leadership, both in the home and in the church.

Paul then sums up his discussion of deacons.

**<sup>13</sup> 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.**

I started out with several questions that relate to our goals and aspirations. We should really ask questions like... *What do I want to be like? What are the character qualities I value?* A great place to begin answering these questions is by taking a careful look at the qualifications for the office of deacon (and deaconess) in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Make it your goal to be this kind of person, and to have these kinds of character traits. Make it your plan to be this kind of person. Determine to develop these traits in yourself. Put your will to it. Value these character qualities and they will serve you well.