

# Appointing Deacons

Franklin Church of Christ  
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PM Worship

## Introduction:

This church is in a truly exciting time. We have all kinds of new things going on. One of which is the appointment of new deacons. The workload on the present deacons is too heavy. That is a good thing. Heavy workloads mean work is being done and growth is coming. However, we do not have to leave these men overloaded. We can look through the congregation and find more men who are qualified and willing to bear the burden, serving the church as deacons. With that in mind, during this lesson we are going to briefly do three things. We will examine the deacon's duty. We will review his qualifications. Finally, while I cannot anticipate every possible question about the qualification of deacons, we will answer three questions I have seen brought up repeatedly in many churches.

## Discussion:

- I. The deacon's duty.
  - A. There is no passage that describes the deacons' roles. Additionally, brethren do not universally agree regarding the one passage which could possibly provide us with an example (**Acts 6:1-6**). Therefore, in order to understand the deacon's duty, we simply turn to the word itself. The word "deacon" comes from the Greek "diakonos" which "primarily denotes a servant, whether as doing a servile work, or as an attendant rendering free service" (**Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, p. 274).
  - B. While all Christians are to be servants, deacons are obviously men appointed to a particular role of service within the congregation. Clearly, as bishops are overseers in the congregation, the deacons work is done in submission to the elders (**I Peter 5:2**). In fact, we may quite naturally view the deacons as assistants to the elders. Elders, who oversee a congregation, can certainly not do every bit of the work needed to accomplish the work within the church. Naturally, they will find assistants to help organize the work. That is perhaps why deacons are always mentioned alongside the elders (**Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8**). Do not misunderstand, deacons are not junior or associate elders. Yet they are clearly assistants to the elders and servants within the congregation. As such, their role is not very prestigious. It is often behind the scenes and rarely receives the thanks it deserves. Yet their role is highly important for a well-functioning church.
- II. The deacon's qualifications (**I Timothy 3:8-13**).
  - A. Before reviewing the qualifications listed, we need to recognize two facts.
    1. *These qualifications are listed in order to qualify not disqualify men.* Most people treat these qualifications as an examination with which to intrude into every detail of a man's life to find out why he does not fit the mold. These indicators were given to help us train and develop men to become deacons, not as ammunition to blow godly men out of the water.
    2. *In general, the qualifications are growth-oriented.* A qualified man will not have reached perfection in any qualification but achieved a level of maturity which makes him stand out. For instance, the deacon does not have to be as reverent as he possibly could be. That would mean he no longer needed to grow. Who among us could say that? Rather, we are looking for men who have attained a maturity in reverence such that they stand out.
  - B. Paul listed nine indicators of men who could fill the office of deacon.
    1. *"Reverent"* – The deacon is one who is to be dignified. He understands the seriousness and gravity of Christianity and of his role and, therefore, works accordingly.
    2. *"Not double-tongued"* – No liars or hypocrites. The deacon behaves and speaks the same way in front of the brethren and in front of the world.
    3. *"Not given to much wine"* – The deacon controls his flesh, he is not controlled by it.
    4. *"Not greedy for money"* – The KJV says, "not greedy of filthy lucre." That is, deacons do not seek ill-gotten gains.
    5. *"Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience"* – The deacon does not waiver in his faith, but holds fast to it, without hidden agendas or underlying motives. He maintains a pure conscience, doing what he believes is right before God despite what anyone else says.
    6. *"Being found blameless"* – Blameless, here, does not mean sinless. If it did, who could ever be a deacon? Nor does it mean one who has never been blamed. The sad fact is that Christians will always be the object of blame (**I Peter 2:12**). Rather, it means that the

qualified man's conduct is honorable, so that even if people speak evil against him, his conduct speaks for itself, putting his opponents to shame.

7. *"Husbands of one wife"* – Deacons are clearly to be married men. But the qualification goes further than that. Not only is he married to one woman, but that woman is good enough for him. He does not have a wandering eye, nor does he behave inappropriately around women. He does not seek female companionship and emotional support from other women. He is married and relies completely upon, is satisfied with and devoted to his one wife.
8. *"Ruling their children and their own houses well"* – These men have already demonstrated good leadership at home, having children and homes that are well-run. A man whose children are disobedient and disrespectful has not proven himself to be a deacon. A man who cannot manage the affairs of a home, should not be entrusted with the work of the church.
9. *"Their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things."* The man who is qualified to serve as a deacon has a good, godly and reliable wife.

### III. Common questions about appointing deacons.

#### A. Are deacons allowed to be given to a little wine? (speaking of alcohol)

1. Some argue that a man who only drinks a little could be a deacon because he is only forbidden much wine. While we do not have time to study why no Christian is allowed to be a moderate drinker, note two points about this text which demonstrate the argument is faulty.
2. First, in the Bible, the term "wine" is used the same way the modern term "cider" is used. Sometimes it refers to alcohol and sometimes it does not. Only our preconceived ideas claim the wine here refers to alcohol. Paul could certainly be saying that a deacon is simply one who is not consumed with and governed by fleshly desires. Rather, he is in control of his flesh. At present, that is what I believe the text has in mind.
3. Secondly, if the term does refer to alcohol, the statement "not given to much wine" no more authorizes having a little wine than the phrase "not greedy of filthy lucre" authorizes being simply greedy for money. A deacon is not allowed a little alcoholic wine.

#### B. Must deacons have more than one child?

1. Because the text uses the term children, some have become convinced that a man can only be a deacon if he has more than one child. Please, consider the following observations.
2. First, the text not only says that the deacons must rule their "children" well, but also their "houses." To claim that a deacon must rule more than one child, would mean that he would also have to run more than one house.
3. Second, the Bible repeatedly uses the term "children" when the possibility of only one child is allowed. If we make this verse mean only more than one child, we will have to deal with some interesting ramifications in other passages. For instance, we could not support widows unless they raised more than one child (**I Timothy 5:10**). An only child can be disobedient until siblings are born (**Ephesians 6:1**). A father can provoke his only child to wrath, but once he has more than one he must stop (**Ephesians 6:4**). The Bible repeatedly uses the plural "children" to include those who only have one. Men with one child can be deacons.

#### C. Can a divorced/widowed and remarried man be a deacon?

1. Some suggest that such a man cannot be a deacon, claiming he has had two wives.
2. This passage does not say a deacon can only have been married once, but he can only be the husband of one wife. How many wives does a widowed and remarried man have? One. No matter how we may view it emotionally, **Romans 7:1-3** demonstrates that a couple is no longer married once one of them dies. By the same token, how many wives does a lawfully divorced and remarried man have? One. If these men had two wives, not only could they not be deacons they could not be members of the church. Yes, these men can be deacons.

### Conclusion:

I certainly hope this lesson has helped. I also hope that the real importance of what we are doing here profoundly impacts your life. Take seriously this task. Look among the men of the congregation. When you see one who is qualified, go speak with him first. If he is willing to serve, bring his name to the elders so they can consider him and bring his name before the congregation.