

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS

Acts 6:1-7

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. God holds every church responsible for the leaders it chooses. Churches that do not use the Word of God to guide them in the selection of their leaders inevitably get in trouble and are in trouble with God.
- b. The word Deacon means servant. Deacons are servants who serve the Lord by serving in their local church. Today we look at the role and qualifications of Deacons.

II. THE ROLE OF DEACONS-

- a. Acts 6 tells us of the founding of the office of Deacon. This passage tells us: **#1, The office of Deacon was established to minister to the church family.** The first Deacons were chosen to administer an important food distribution program for needy believers.
- b. **#2, The office of Deacon was established to free the Apostles, the first Pastors, to pray and prepare to minister the Word.**
- c. **#3, The first Deacons were selected based on their spiritual qualifications.** The first Deacons were not selected based on their social status or economic standing. They were selected based on their spiritual qualifications. They were men full of the Spirit and wisdom.
- d. **#4, The first Deacons were men of spiritual power.** *Acts 6:8 (NLT) "Stephen, (one of the first Deacons) (was) a man full of God's grace and power, (who) performed amazing miracles and signs among the people."*
- e. **#5, The first Deacons had a firm understanding of sound doctrine.** *Acts 6:9-10 (NLT) "But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with (Stephen)... 10 None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke."*
- f. **#6, The first Deacons advanced the unity of the church.** *Acts 6:5 (NLT) "Everyone liked (voted for) this idea..."* The first Deacons eliminated controversy and brought about unity in the church.
- g. **#7, The first Deacons stimulated the church to evangelism and personally shared the gospel with the lost.** *Acts 6:7 (NLT) "So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too." Acts 8:5 (NKJV) "Then Philip (one of the first Deacons) went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them."*

- h. Based on this and other passages we have a good idea of the biblical role of Deacons.
- i. Deacons are to assist the Pastor in leading the church, sharing the gospel, reaching out to the lost and ministering to the needs of the church family.
- j. Deacons are to promote unity in the church and they are to help the Pastor deal with difficult situations that might arise in the church family.
- k. The Pastor and Deacons are to lead the church in doing God's will, taking a stand on moral issues, defending the faith and Biblical truth and protecting the witness and testimony of the church.
- l. Deacons are to protect and support the Pastor. Unless he does something morally or doctrinally wrong the Deacons are to support their Pastor, as he is to support them. (Not policemen or adversaries but partners.)
- m. Deacons are to make sure that everyone in the church family is loved and ministered to, no matter who they are. Deacons are to make sure that no one in the church is ever looked over or left out.

III. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS-

- a. **Deacons are to be saved.** Only those men whose life bears a clear, consistent and strong Christian testimony should be chosen as Deacons.
- b. **Deacons are to be Spirit-filled.** Deacons are to be men who are filled with the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit must be evident in their lives. They are to be men of worship and prayer and men who love God's Word.
- c. **Deacons should be active in, faithful to and committed to the church.** Deacons have to be more than just Sunday morning Christians.
- d. **Deacons should fulfill the core qualifications of Deacons that are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.** *1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NKJV) "Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, 9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. 10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. 11 Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."*

- e.* Deacons must be reverent. They must be honorable men who are worthy of respect. A Deacon must be serious about spiritual things and a man who takes the responsibility of being a deacon seriously.
- f.* A Deacon must not be double-tongued. He must be honest, consistent and righteous in his speech. A Deacon must be a man of his word who is able to guard his speech and not be a gossip.
- g.* A Deacon must "not given to much wine." I believe the standard today should be that a Deacon is one who totally abstains from alcohol. A Deacon must be a man who is clear thinking and self controlled.
- h.* A Deacon must not be "greedy for money." He must not be controlled by the pursuit of money. He must not live for money. He must be honest in how he handles his money.
- i.* A Deacon must not be the kind of person who would ever put monetary gain ahead of serving the Lord. And, a Deacon should be a tither. No man who fails to at least tithe should serve as a Deacon in the church.
- j.* 1 Tim. 3:9 says a Deacon should "hold the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience." A Deacon should have an accurate understanding of the gospel and the doctrines of the Christian faith. He should be a student of the Bible and a man of biblically based convictions.
- k.* Verse 9 says a Deacon should not be untested. He should not be a novice, new Christian or uninvolved church member. He should be someone who has a proven record of faith and commitment.
- l.* A Deacon should "blameless." He should be a man of high moral, ethical and spiritual standards. He should be a man characterized by pure living and holy conduct. A man who is above reproach.
- m.* Deacons don't have to be married but if a Deacon is married his wife is to be a believer who is respectable and honorable. She should not given to loose talk, tattling or gossip. She should be a morally and ethically pure and a person who can be trusted.
- n.* A Deacon who is married is to be "the husband of one wife" or literally a "one woman man."
- o.* The phrase "husband of one wife" does not refer to polygamy. While polygamy was practiced in Middle Eastern and Asian cultures, 1 Timothy was written to a predominately Roman and Greek culture in which polygamy was not commonly practiced or accepted.

- p. The phrase “husband of one wife” is not mechanical phrase that would coldly speak to polygamy. It is a phrase full of passion. A Deacon is to be a man who loves his wife. He is to be a true, loyal and faithful husband. A Deacon is to have a single-minded love and devotion for his wife.
- q. This qualification does not eliminate all divorced men from serving as Deacons. Whether or not a divorced man is still qualified to serve as a Deacon depends on the circumstance of his divorce. ***For example***, men who are the victims of a divorce would not be scripturally eliminated from serving as Deacons as long as their lives consistently fulfill the qualifications of Deacons.
- r. There are at least two applications of this qualification. First, it sets a high standard of sexual purity for men who would be Deacons.
- s. This qualification teaches that the man who is sexually impure; who is being unfaithful to his wife; who is living with a woman outside of marriage; (and God forbid that we have to say this in these days) who is a homosexual; who is a womanizer and a chronic flirt should never be elected or allowed to continue to serve as a Deacon.
- t. Second, this phrase requires that a Deacon be a faithful and committed husband if he is married. The professing Christian man who abandons his wife for another woman violates this qualification and disqualifies himself from ***ever*** serving as a Deacon or as a Pastor with the sanction and approval of God.
- u. Yes, the man who does this can be forgiven if he repents. Yes, he can be restored and serve the Lord in many wonderful ways. Yes, he can be forgiven to live a good and productive Christian life but he ***can never*** serve in the office of Deacon or Pastor with the sanction and approval of God. Those doors are closed to him.
- v. I know this is the 21st Century and this is a politically correct world but there are still consequences for violating the Word of God! Like it or not God holds Deacons and Pastors to a high standard of character and conduct.
- w. Yes, God forgave David of his sin with Bathsheba but the sword never left his house. Yes, God forgave Samson for his sin with Delilah but he still lost his position as judge. And a man who forsakes his wife can be forgiven but he will forever lose the sanction and approval of God to serve as a Deacon or Pastor.
- x. Paul said in *1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV)* “*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*”

- y. If committing a sexual sin would disqualify the Apostle Paul from preaching and leading the church then the man who violates this qualification and abandons his wife for another is certainly disqualified from being a Deacon or a Pastor.
- z. Verse 12 says that the Deacons should be good managers of their home and good Christian fathers to their children.

IV. CONCLUSION-

- a. The reward of those Deacons who serve well is great. *1 Timothy 3:13 (NKJV) "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."*
- b. Deacons who serve faithfully obtain a good reputation in the church, a good reputation in the community and a good standing before the Lord.