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C1125 – August 3, 2011 – 1 Timothy 3:8-13
Qualifications Of The Deacon

Let's begin with a question that came up last week related to 1 Tim 3 and the qualifications of elder. Are there no qualifications for an elder's wife? What if she causes problems? Does that disqualify a man from serving as an elder? That's a good question. It came up in the discussion afterward that it doesn't appear that there are any qualifications for elder's wives. However, if you look at verse 4 you will see that the wife of an elder is included in his household. And **he must be one who manages his own household well**. So the wife is included in the household and the man must be one who is ruling her well according to the rest of NT Scripture on husbands and wives. The word **manages** means to rule, to stand over, and in this case to rule well. He's the head of the household and if his wife is out of control there's no way he would qualify. So there are no qualifications for the prospective elder's wife, but if his wife is out of control and a problem maker then he is not going to meet this criterion of ruling his household well. So by default he could not serve as an elder.

Alright, turn once again to 1 Tim 3. Tonight we are going to continue our class on church leadership. The form of church government that we adhere to at Fredericksburg Bible Church is called Presbyterian after the Greek word *presbuteros*, usually translated "elder." This model has a plurality of elders that oversee *all* aspects of the church and a plurality of deacons that are delegated certain responsibilities by the elders so that they are freed up to prayer and ministering the word.

The reason for two offices is simply because there are two spheres of life; there is the spiritual sphere and there is the physical or material sphere; there are spiritual needs and there are physical needs. And so the responsibilities of fulfilling these needs are divided up into two spheres. The

elders sphere is to fulfill the spiritual needs and they do this by devoting themselves to prayer and ministry of the word. Their responsibilities are more private, more behind closed doors so to speak. Prayer takes quiet and discipline and so he has to get alone and discipline himself to think through various spiritual needs, what the real issues are, how to formulate arguments in prayer, how to present a case before God, and second, ministry of the word requires that he get alone and study the word of God so that when he teaches it he has something valuable to say that is accurate, that is conveying what the word of God is teaching. So the elder, if he's going to meet the spiritual needs of God's people, is going to be more private than most people suppose. He's not going to be on the building committee and the Sunday School Committee and the dance committee and the visitation committee and all the other committees people think he should be on. He's more of a private man who comes into the limelight after thoughtful preparation to meet the spiritual needs of God's people.

The deacon's sphere is to fulfill the physical needs of God's people. These needs may come to light by the deacons themselves or by the elders and so there has to be clear communication between the elders and the deacons and then the deacons are delegated the responsibility to provide for these physical needs; things like provision of food, money to pay bills, helping widows, visiting the sick, even serving communion to the bedridden and those in nursing homes, those kinds of things. So they are much more public, they are much more in the limelight than the elders and that strikes people as strange but it's the nature of their primary duties that takes them into the private or public sector. But together these two offices of men lead the Church. So make sure you understand there are these two spheres and that each office is devoted primarily to one of the two spheres; the elders to the spiritual and the deacons to the physical.

At the same time understand that these two spheres overlap, often when there are physical problems there are spiritual needs as well, so the elders and the deacons are going to have to be in close communication; they're not isolated from one another and the deacons do their thing totally closed off from the elders and vice versa. No, they are in constant communication about the various needs of the church so as to rule well, and there are many times when their roles are going to cross over. So, for example, the elder is going to teach what the word of God says about money and proper management of

money, etc...so that the people are equipped in that area. But when there are problems with money for example, the deacon will be the one who dispenses that benevolence. And while he's doing that he may have to deal with some spiritual problems as well. So the two spheres overlap and we'll see that the deacon's qualifications imply that. There is a lot of overlap in the elders and deacons qualifications.

Last time we looked at the elders qualifications in 1 Tim 3:1-7. This is a central passage on eldership. We find it in Timothy because Timothy is part of the Pastoral Epistles that Paul wrote. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are all what Bible teachers call the pastorals. The reason is because they are written from one pastor to another pastor, they are written from Paul to Timothy and from Paul to Titus and in these letters Paul is communicating a pastor's heart, a true pastor's heart. I don't just mean someone who has the title; I mean a true pastor, one whose main concern is to pray and to teach. And by the way, I suspect there are very few true pastors. Most people that have the title pastor are social organizers, business administrators and charismatic personalities, that's all they are, but not true pastors. A true pastor's heart is to shepherd the church of God and you will know if his heart is for shepherding most clearly by his teaching. If he teaches in-depth Bible lessons that evidence he has been in the word for hours pouring over it and mentally sweating over it, and thinking hard about how to communicate it then it will be obvious that he has a pastor's heart, that he really cares for the sheep and knows that they are God's sheep and that God wants them to be well fed and that what he is doing is very important and that God is watching him. If he's not a true pastor he'll be serving on every committee and spending his time at the coffee shop and on the golf course and at the local pastor's alliance and at every luncheon he's invited to and across town at some political gathering, anything and everything but spending time in the study. And if that's the pastor at your church you need to leave now because he's not obeying God and you can tell from what he says from the pulpit, he, or she these days, is going to be a weak teacher, they are going to give three points and a poem and it's going to be 15-20 minutes of a lot of hot air and an hour of music. You need to leave now and find a Bible teaching church.

Paul in this letter is hoping to come to Ephesus and teach how each person in the church should conduct himself. Observe 1 Tim 3:15, "in case I am delayed," which he was, he never got to come, but he wrote this letter so we

know, “I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God.” This is the letter to read if you want to know what God expects of you in the local church. It’s that easy. If you are a man, read 1 Tim 2:1-8. If you are a woman read 1 Tim 2:9-15. If you are an elder read 1 Tim 3:1-7 and if you are a deacon read 1 Tim 3:8-13. The rest of the letter is devoted to elders actually, what kind of attacks elders are going to have to fend off as they oversee the household of God.

But this week we’re interested in the qualifications of the deacon. This follows on the heels of the qualifications of the elder in 1 Tim 3:1-7 which we taught last week, and you will observe this week there are some similarities in the qualifications for the deacons in 1 Tim 3:8-13. That is important for showing you there is some overlap in function. But there are also some differences and that is important for showing you they have some distinct functions. And so I’ll point out the similarities and the differences as we go along.

1 Tim 3:8, **Deacons likewise *must be*** and the translators added the ***must be***, you’ll see it is in italics, which means it isn’t in the original text, but they added it because they’re saying it is understood that just as the elders “must be” certain things in vv 2-7 so the deacons must be certain things in vv 8-13. So the deacons ***must be*** these things. They can’t sort of be these things, they can’t be on their way to being these things, they must be these things now or else they don’t qualify. It is an absolute necessity.

Now, having said that let me repeat what I said last week about the list of things they **must be**. What kind of a list is this? Is this a sin list or a character list? It’s a character list. Since the elder qualifications are all character qualifications, then it follows that the deacon qualifications **likewise** are character qualifications. So we’re going to take the whole chapter together, looking at it as putting forth what kind of man an elder must be and what kind of man a deacon must be. It’s not a sin list, did so and so ever get drunk, did so and so ever get a divorce, that’s not the kind of question you’re asking. The kind of question you’re asking is what kind of man is this now? What’s his character like now? By now we mean you’re not considering his life when he was an unbeliever and you’re not considering his life when he was a new believer, a neophyte. You can’t look at his life when he was an unbeliever because then he only had the flesh as an operating

asset and you can't consider him when he was a new believer because new believers walk by the flesh until they are taught and have some doctrine under their belt and understand what God expects of them and how to achieve it, by walking by the Spirit. So what you're interested in is what kind of character this man has now that he has matured. So we only go back so far in history to evaluate and that point is when they were a mature believer. By that we mean a believer who has been in training and understands doctrine and can explain it to others.

Now as we go into this section we'll answer certain questions about graduation - is there any indication that the office of deacon is a stepping stone up to the office of elder and if the man does well as a deacon he graduates to an elder. And the other controversial thing is whether there is a third office of deaconess spoken of in this passage. There are serious questions raised by church history and Bible commentators on these verses.

So verse 8, **Deacons likewise *must be***, and that is obviously pointing out a similarity with elders. Deacons must be certain things too. So let's deal with the word **deacons** before we head into what they must be like. The word is *diakonous* and immediately it reminds us of Acts 6. So let's go back to Acts 6, the formation of the diaconate. This word is usually claimed to mean a "servant" or "minister" but that's not entirely correct. The word basically means "an intermediary, an agent, a go-between, a courier, an assistant"; they're someone who is acting on behalf of another. And in this case it's someone acting on behalf of the elders. That's why in 1 Tim 3 the elders are discussed first and then the deacons. The deacons are the assistants of the elders; their duties are delegated to them by the elders. So again, they work in close association with one another.

Now in Acts 6 we have the formation of the diaconate. Granted, at this time it was sort of primitive but later this became the model when this office got set up. And the deacon word group is found in v 1, 2 and 4. There's a whole series of words in this word group. At the end of verse 1 it's translated "serving," at the end of verse 2 it's translated "serve" and in verse 4 it's used of the apostles and is translated "ministry." And we want to review some of the points we made back when we studied this in detail. One thing to observe in verse 2 is that it was the twelve apostles who decided to form the office of deacon and it is obvious that they would be acting as assistants or agents of

the apostles, they would be carrying out a task that the apostles had been carrying out. Now the deacons will carry it out on behalf of the apostles. That's basically is the original function of the deacons, to serve as intermediary agents on behalf of the apostles. Later, the apostles will appoint elders and this function will be transferred over to them. A second thing to observe is that the apostles decided that the congregation of the disciples should be the ones to select men for deacons. They didn't want to select them; they wanted the congregation of the disciples to do it. Notice, not the congregation of believers. Luke is very precise throughout his book that a believer and a disciple are not the same thing; a believer is someone who has believed the gospel, which is fine and dandy, but a disciple is a believer in training. Not all believers are in training, some of them are sitting around doing nothing. The apostles weren't interested in that kind of believer's input. They wanted the input of believers in training. Here we'd call them the core group, the people that are actively involved in the church, and in particular, in training in the word. Those people actually have something to say, it's the rest of believers who give Christianity a bad name. A third thing to observe is that in verse 3 the apostles put the deacons in charge of the task. So the congregation of disciples chose them but the apostles put them in charge of the task. Now this is turned over to the elders of course. And fourth, in verse 6, you can see that they prayed over these men and then had a formal ceremony where they laid their hands on them to install them into the office.

So when we come to 1 Tim 3:8 understand that Acts 6 was all in the past and this model grew out of Acts 6. So now that the apostles have died off and they appointed elders in all the churches then it's the elders who say to the congregation of disciples, you choose three, four, ten, whatever number of men is necessary to assist, bring them to us and we will pray about them and install them into office by a public, formal laying on of hands ceremony. That's how it was done and that ceremony is very important because the meaning of the ceremony is that the elders are saying, these men are our assistants. You had a say in who they are, you wanted these men and now we want you to recognize them because they are our assistants and we are going to be sending them on missions for us; they are our agents for your benefit. So this laying on of hands bit is very important, it is putting the deacons in an official role as assistants to the elders.

Now we can really get into verse 8, there are twelve qualifications in all. First, **Deacons likewise *must be men of dignity***. Difficult word, most difficult word in the whole list and it's used again in verse 11 of the women or wives; that problem we'll solve there. But they must be **men of dignity**. And we note that deacons must be **men**. That was the model in Acts 6, they were told by the apostles to choose seven men. Here it clearly says **men**. They were following the Acts 6 model. And not any men, but **men of dignity**. The word *semnous* means "serious, grave," it sounds very stoic, but I think the point is that he is a serious man and therefore worthy of special respect. Vine says of this term: "No English word exactly conveys the meaning of *semnos*, which combines the thoughts both of gravity and dignity," or, as Moule points out, "both of seriousness of purpose and self-respect in conduct." He can't be a funny man who can't be serious and hasn't earned respect. The men have to be worthy of respect and since the congregation of disciples will be selecting them I'm sure they would be. Second, **not double-tongued**, *dilogous*, means he comes over here and tells you one thing and then goes over there to me and tells me something else. He's two-tongued like the pastor in Pilgrim's Progress, Mr Two-Tongues. These kinds of people. I've met these kinds of people and they're very difficult people. They've mastered the art of twisting things and they twist it one way for you and another way for someone else and you can never get a straight story, but you know what's going on and it's this kind of person I'd warn you to keep your distance from and definitely keep your mouth shut, I wouldn't tell them anything important. And you can't have that kind of man as a deacon. Third, **or addicted to much wine** and here it's similar to the elder in verse 3. He also is not to be addicted to wine. This doesn't mean no wine, it's not abstinence, it's moderation. Later in 5:23 he's going to tell Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach. So obviously the Bible is not against wine. It's against being addicted to wine and it's also against hard liquor. But beverages that have small percentages of alcohol; 3, 4, 5%, like biblical wine, are permissible in moderation. Once you get into higher percentages the person has a tendency not to be able to moderate the effects and they get themselves in trouble. And it should be clear from the Bible that too much alcohol is destructive of any and every one and clearly no one in leadership can be a heavy drinker. Fourth, **or fond of sordid gain**. A man who is fond of sordid gain is a man who somehow makes small gains in mean ways; he finds various pathways for making dishonest gains. He finds loopholes and capitalizes on them. One of the things we've tried to do here as elders is close all possible loopholes so not one of us can do

this or be tempted to do this. And the deacons, they clearly will have some association with money, on some level, and so they can't be **fond of sordid gain** or this is just going to be an area of temptation and they're going to fall.

Fifth, verse 9, **holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience**. As far as a mystery is concerned in the English language it's something that is kept secret. It might sound like what he's saying is that the deacon holds to certain secrets of the Christian faith that nobody else knows, sort of like the Masons do. They have their 33 degrees and as you go from one degree to the next more secrets are told to you. That's not what mystery in the Greek language is talking about. What this is talking about is that there are certain things that were mysteries for man, man can't figure them out unless God reveals them to us. As Earle says, "Today the word *mystery* implies knowledge withheld; in the Bible it indicates truth revealed."ⁱ So he must hold to the revealed truths of the NT. And he's going to give a summary of them down in verse 16, they center on the person and work of Christ, "He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory." That's an early confession that all believers would recite and so today, practically speaking, we'd say a deacon has to agree with our doctrinal statement: does the man agree with it or not, does he hold to it **with a clear conscience**. Because if he doesn't then if you turn back to 1:19 you'll see how dangerous it is to hold to things without a **clear conscience**. "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected," Paul's saying you should always follow your conscience. Never violate your conscience. Your conscience is an inner standard, it's not an absolute standard. My conscience may disagree with your conscience. I may be able to drink a glass of wine in good conscience and you may not be able to, so be it, but if your conscience says don't drink a glass of wine you better not do it because I do because then you're violating your conscience, you're not acting in faith and whatsoever is not of faith is sin and then you're headed into real trouble. Verse 19, "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith." Certain men rejected their conscience, they violated it and Paul says your whole faith will go down the tubes if you do that. And then he gives some examples of men that went down this path and it all started because they didn't keep the faith with a clean conscience. So now go back to 3:9 and see if it isn't clearer. **holding to the mystery of the faith**, that's the newly revealed truths of the NT starting with Christ, **holding to**

the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, that is, there's nothing in those truths with which you are battling. You have to hold to the virgin birth of Christ with a clear conscience, you can't be questioning it. You have to hold to the miracles of Christ with a clear conscience, you can't be stuck over here on natural law. You have to hold to the substitutionary blood atonement of Christ; these kinds of things can't be questions in your mind. You have to be firm on these things if you want to be a deacon.

Now we come to verse 10, **These men must also first be tested**, we're not told how they were tested, we only know that they were to be tested. Now whatever the test is, and it could be what he's just gone through talking in verse 9, tested on whether they hold to the mystery of the faith with a clean conscience or not, but whatever the test is to approve of them, it is not setting out to fail them. This word for test is the word "test so as to approve." So it's not some big stumper test, it's not some big investigation to try and pin something on the man, it's a test to become confident that this man can serve. The congregation has already chosen you, so now the elders will administer this test to make sure this man is approved (Phil 1:10). **Then let them serve**, that's next in sequence, **first tested...then let them serve**. You don't test them after you've already installed them in office. You test them first and then install them in office, **then let them serve if they are beyond reproach** and you want to scratch beyond reproach, **if they are blameless**, that is, if they pass the test, if they are spotless, then they should serve, there's no reason at that point to hold them back from serving. And I want to point out a difference here. There's something conspicuously different between an elder and a deacon on this point. A man who wants to be an elder has to aspire to the office, he has to really want it, but a man who's chosen for deacon does not have to really want it, he has to be chosen by the congregation for it. Whether he really wants to do it or not is not an issue. The issue is that the elders do not need to neglect prayer and teaching of the word and so they need assistance, therefore they have the core group select some deacons that could attend to their needs. There is no Spirit implanted desire for this office as there is for elder.

Verse 11, and here we enter into a debate. **Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.** **12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife**, I read into verse 12 to give you more context. The debate here is over whether this is **women** or

wives. The word is *gune* and can be translated either way and that's what makes for difficulty in interpretation and the three views. The first view is that these are women deacons, this would be a separate office, so the church would have three offices in this view; elder, deacon and deaconess. The second view is that these are unmarried women who assist the deacons. So they're single women that help the deacons fulfill certain tasks, not a separate office. And the third view is that these are the wives of the deacons who help them fulfill certain tasks.

Let's just make some observations in the context and see which view is most likely. If we went back all the way to 2:9-15 we could see that *gune* is used in almost every verse and probably this is just the general use of *gune* as "women," married or not, it doesn't matter. Paul says this is how women ought to conduct themselves in the church, though verse 15 might indicate that they are married women because it's talking about childbearing. So it is possible that 2:9-15 is talking about wives and not just women, but I think it applies to all women, married or not.

Next we see *gune* in 3:2, "husband of one wife," or as we translated, "one woman man," and this is clearly in context referring to a wife and not just a woman. If the elder is married he has to be devoted to his wife. So verse 2 is clearly wife, not just woman.

Then we come to verse 11, our verse where *gune* is used, but let's skip it for a second and come on down to verse 12 where we see *gune* again, **Deacons must be husbands of only one wife** and that's almost identical to verse 2 used of the elders. So *gune* here also refers to "wife" and not just a woman.

Now having said that come back to verse 11. The first thing we can say is that everything in the near context indicates *gune* is a wife. The very next verse clearly uses *gunaikos* as a wife, deacons must be **husbands of one wife**. So the context would argue that Paul has wives in mind and not unmarried women. And this would cast serious doubt on view two, that these are unmarried women assisting the deacons. Besides, that sounds dangerous. Why would you make unmarried women assistants of married men? That's just asking for trouble. And besides, in the first century it was unthinkable that a Jewish man would even talk to a woman in private, much less have one as his assistant. That's one of the reasons Jesus' disciples were so

shocked when they found him talking with the woman at the well. You didn't talk to women in private, that was not the cultural norm and it did not look good. So for a married man to have an unmarried woman helping him just does not make for a good situation.

And second, observe that verse 11 is sandwiched between verses 10 and 12. Verse 10 is instruction about deacons and verse 12 is instruction about deacons. Inside that sandwich you find verse 11. So if verses 10 and 12 are discussing the office of deacon then why would Paul introduce a distinct office of deaconess in the middle of that sandwich? Why not wait until you are done talking about the office of deacon in verse 13 and then introduce a third office of deaconess? That to me casts serious doubt on view one, that these are women deacons holding a third office in the church called deaconess.

It's the third view that looks the most promising, that these are the deacon's wives, this view has the least problems. It makes sense of the fact that the wives are sandwiched within a passage on deacons and it fits well the context where *gune* is clearly used of the deacon's wife in the next verse.

However, scholars argue back and for example turn to Rom 16:1. There are many good theologians who take view one, women deacons, a third office. The Greek scholar A.T. Robertson held this view; Tom Constable who just retired from Dallas Theological Seminary holds this view, and others. One of their arguments is that while it is not clear what the NT teaches on the office of deaconess, in post-apostolic times the office of deaconess is clear and therefore they must have thought that the NT taught it. And they appeal to Rom 16:1 as a possible case of a woman holding the office of deaconess. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;" The word "servant" there is *diakonos* and is sometimes translated deaconess. But even scholars that argue this admit that it may just be saying that she was a servant of the church. There is a sense of this word which is just a servant, one believer serving others and in that sense we are all to serve one another. There is lots of service that goes on between believers that the elders and deacons never even know about. And that's normal, that's supposed to happen. But that kind of service is different than serving in the office of deacon. The tasks the deacons carry out official in nature because they are acting as agents of the elders. They are being commissioned for a task. So while the post-apostolic church had an office of deaconess it is

ambiguous whether the NT teaches any such office. Their second argument is that there is nothing about the office that would exclude women. The problem here is that the office does carry authority since the deacons are agents of the elders. Therefore that would give women authority over men and that would contradict 1 Tim 2:12, "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man..." So while women may serve and do serve all the time in the assembly, it does not seem biblical that they should serve in this official authoritative office as agents of the elders. The third argument they make for women deacons is that it seems unusual that Paul would prescribe qualifications for the wives of deacons but not for the wives of elders. However, this objection can be answered on two grounds. One, upon reflection of the elder's qualifications above it is apparent that the wives of the elders must be well-behaved, quiet, respectful women or else the elder himself is disqualified on the grounds of not ruling his household well as we said earlier. And secondly, upon reflection of the different functions of elder and deacon it becomes apparent why the wives of deacons would need specific qualifications and not the wives of elders. The wives of elders do not assist them in praying or teaching, the spiritual things, but the wives of deacons do assist them in the distribution of funds, visitation of women, handling of sensitive female needs and helping children, the physical things. So I don't see these as convincing reasons to have a third office of deaconess for women.

What makes much more sense is that these are the deacon's wives who assist their husbands in some of the more sensitive tasks that are assigned. Let's think about why? Why would deacons often need their wives to assist them? Because they're dealing primarily with widows and orphans. Unmarried women and children are the specialty of a woman. Sometimes there are sensitive female issues that another woman needs to attend to, they may be handled officially or unofficially, but if they are handled officially by the deacons then they need to have their wife with them. And sometimes there are children involved and children are especially within the responsibility of women. Paul makes that abundantly clear in 1 Tim 2:15. Therefore if an official task is assigned to a deacon and it relates to children he should take his wife along to assist him. So there are a number of deacon's functions that could be sensitive situations and so it makes a lot of sense that the deacon's wife would be a required asset. And that's why her qualifications are sandwiched here in verse 11.

Alright, that said, let's look at her qualifications. There are four. **Women**, let's translate **Wives, Wives *must* likewise be dignified, *semnas***, in the same way as the men in verse 8 who are their husbands must be *semnous*, so their wives must be *semnas*, **dignified** The word means a woman who is serious with the effect that she is worthy of respect. Second, **not malicious gossips**, assisting their husbands in tending to other women or children they are going to come into possession of sensitive information and since woman in particular have the gift of gab; the wives of deacons have to be disciplined not to use it. They can't be blabbing about everything. That's how women tend to fight and jockey for position. But they shouldn't do that; they should assist as quiet women who protect sensitive information, who keep things confidential. Third, **but temperate**, that means cool-headed, able to keep their cool when they're sitting there hearing information they don't like, they have to be able to keep their cool and simply gather information, not lose it and get angry. There is a way which sounds right, until you hear the other side of the story! And fourth, **faithful in all things**, the idea of faithful here is reliable, they have to be wives that can be counted on to accomplish the sensitive tasks that are assigned to the deacons. So both the husband and his wife must qualify if the husband is to serve as a deacon.

Verse 12, **Deacons must be husbands of only one wife**, we said that's the same as the elder in verse 2, he must be devoted to his one wife, not flirtatious, not eyes popping out of his head every time some good looking woman walks by, a one woman kind of a man. That's very hard to do today since women don't wear clothes any more. It would help if they would cover up and dress modestly in the church. And further in verse 12, **good managers of their children and their own households**. Almost identical to the elders in v 4 above, they must have their entire households in order, that includes their wife, their children (those living at home) and at the time they often had servants, the house overall had to be well-run; it had to have rule and order, it could not be chaos. Again, ruling the home is a training ground for ruling the household of God. If he fails to rule his home well then he'll fail to rule the household of God well. And this also shows you another reason that women can't be deacons. They are not the rulers of the household, the man is. Therefore the rulers of the household of God are not the women, but the men.

Finally, verse 13, **For**, explanatory gar, meaning this is why these men must have these qualifications. Why must they have them? **For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.** In other words, you as the congregation want to select men that have these qualifications because that will set them up for success. If you choose men who do not have these qualifications and the elders lay hands on them and install them in office, then you're just setting these men up for failure. And you don't want to do that, you want to select well-qualified men, whose wives also qualify, to serve in this office because you're setting them up for success. And those who do serve well, some may not, but those who do **obtain for themselves** two things; one, **a high standing**, that is, "a good standing" with those in the church, become even more respected and honored because they accomplish their tasks with excellence. It's not the idea that they get a higher rank and graduate up to an elder. That has been the interpretation of some because the word for **standing** can mean a step up, but this is not talking about them stepping up from deacon to elder. Some men are qualified to be elders and some are not, the main qualification difference is aptness to teach, skill and propensity to teach the flock, and that is not something one earns by serving well as a deacon. What one does earn by serving well is a good standing among the congregation of the disciples. So you don't graduate from deacon to elder and the diaconate is not a stepping stone to the elderate. However, this does not mean that a deacon can never serve as an elder. If he has a Spirit implanted aspiration to serve as an elder, which will most likely be associated with a desire to teach, then he should be considered.

Second, they also earn for themselves **great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus**, or it could be **boldness**. Confidence and boldness are not totally exclusive of one another. If one has inner confidence in the Christian faith then he has great boldness in declaring it. I think Stephen in Acts 6-7 is an example. As he started out serving tables he gained great confidence in the faith and that resulted in tremendous boldness in evangelism. His faith was increased. And so what Paul is getting at is that as the deacon fulfills his assigned tasks his confidence in the word of God increases because he sees the fruit of the word of God at work in people's lives. There is great increase in confidence as we see the word of God at work in people's lives. And the result is greater boldness in utilizing the word of God because you realize the word of God cannot be defeated.

In conclusion then, let's put forth a few principles about the qualifications of the deacon. First, just as the elders must be certain kinds of men so the deacons must be certain kinds of men. They cannot merely show promise or be on their way to being a certain kind of man, they must already be the man herein described. Second, while not stated here it is stated in Acts 6 that the core group of disciples should select the deacons according to the qualifications outlined. They should do this carefully because you want the men you choose to be successful and achieve a good standing among you. It's the elders who will install them in the office. Third, these are character qualifications, not sin issues, you're not asking what has this man done; you're asking what is this man like? Fourth, you can't consider his whole life. You are only looking at his life as a mature believer, not a new believer and whether he divorced his wife as a new believer or something, but as a mature believer, that's the area under investigation. Fifth, his wife must also qualify according to her standards put forth in verse 11 because of the nature of the tasks assigned to him which are mainly in the physical sphere of visitation, distribution of benevolence, helping the needy, children, and so forth. All areas of female expertise. Sixth, the office of deacon is necessary to free the elders to attend to the primary responsibilities of prayer and teaching of the word.

There are two spheres and therefore two offices: the spiritual and the physical. They do overlap, but they do have a primary responsibility and the deacon is the assistant to the elder. Together as a unit that communicates effectively, they rule the household of God, remembering that it is not their house, and therefore they must submit to God in all their duties.

ⁱ Earle, R. (1981). 1 Timothy. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 11: Ephesians through Philemon* (F. E. Gaebelin, Ed.) (367). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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