

## **DISTINCTIVE! RADICALLY DIFFERENT!**

### **1 Timothy 3:1-16; 4:1-2**

**Please note** that almost without exception the same character qualities set forth for Elders and/or Deacons are elsewhere called for in the New Testament for every believer.

### **ON A LIFETIME JOURNEY OF BECOMING MORE AND MORE LIKE JESUS!** [Several sources used in compiling the following]

“God intends to display the glory of His beauty, perfection, and love through the church. We believe that there is no better evangelistic tool, mission’s strategy, or counseling program than the image of God displayed through His gathering of imperfect but transforming people.” **JESUS CHRIST is building HIS church with men, women, youth, and children who are REDEEMED by the grace of God and who are on a LIFETIME JOURNEY of becoming like Jesus!**

**REALITY: The world’s church seeks to build by means of merging with culture and/or by political engagement—** thus, they will only give lip-service to the New Testament call for godliness. **IN RADICAL CONTRAST, the Bride of Christ, (true churches, true Christians),** are on a lifetime journey of Christlikeness— thus, they will be attentive to and embrace the divine call to godliness.

A study of the New Testament Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, and the letters of Jesus to His churches, (Revelation 2-3)— all reveal clearly that which JESUS DESIRES in His church and from servants (Deacons) and servant leaders (Elders/Bishops/Pastors) in His local congregations. **MOREOVER,** the qualifications set forth in Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; and Titus 1:5-9 are ALL - ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION - set forth in other places in the New Testament as God’s will for EVERY CHRISTIAN. Thus, this study is not only setting forth Biblical truth concerning Elders and Deacons; but it is also setting forth truth for every believer. **THEREFORE, LET US EACH AND EVERYONE** carefully study the following:

**QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS... Elders:** The Bible reveals an interchangeable use of “elders,” “overseers,” and “shepherds/pastors”. **Acts 20:17, 28:** “Paul sent to Ephesus for the *elders* of the church. . . . Keep

watch over . . . the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*. Be *shepherds* . . .” **Titus 1:5-7**: “appoint *elders* . . . . An *elder* must . . . . Since an *overseer* . . .” (qualifications are the same as those for overseers in 1 Tim 3:1-7). **1 Peter 5:1-2**: “To the *elders* . . . . Be *shepherds* . . . , serving as *overseers* . . .”

**(1) The term *elder***, stresses the ***dignity*** and ***position*** of this ministry in the church. **(2) On the other hand, Bishop/overseer** stresses the ***function*** and ***work*** of an elder. **(3) “Shepherd” (“pastor”) is a metaphor** for personal care given to members of the church (Eph 4:11-12).

**1 TIMOTHY 3:1**— The word "desire" means "to stretch one's self out after, to aspire," and thus the man is willing to study and serve and sacrifice in order to be equipped for this office. REALITY: MANY A CHURCH HAS BEEN SPLIT BECAUSE OF SELFISH AMBITION! But there is a biblical and sanctified ambition— (1) It is an ambition that has been cleansed of self-seeking, one that seeks only the glory of God and the well-being of others. (2) It is an ambition that seeks not position, praise, power, prestige, or popularity, but service to God and ministry to men. (3) It is an ambition that has at its center the three important ‘Es’ which define the purpose of the church: The Exaltation of God, The Edification of the body of Christ, and The Evangelization of the lost.

**1 TIMOTHY 3:2**— **BLAMELESS**— not sinless; but above reproach, does not cast reproach upon God's Word or God's Son. Think of a large iron frying pan. People would like to pick up this frying pan and smash this man over the head, but if he is blameless he gives them *no handle*! They cannot pick it up if there is no handle on it (Daniel 6:4-5).

**THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE**— faithful to his wife and exemplifying what Christian marriage really ought to be. He is to be a "one-woman man." No background of divorce **so as to model** the love of Jesus which never fails (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Cor. 13:1-7); **and so as to model** God's plan of one marriage till death do part: Genesis 2:23-24; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:10-12, 39, Titus 1:6; **and so as to model** PROPER CARING FOR HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD: 1 Timothy 3:4-5. NOTE: Some say that 1 Timothy 3:6 and Titus 1:6 ‘SAY NOTHING’ about marriage or divorce... that the issue is not the elder or deacon's marriage status. REALLY? “The husband of one wife” says nothing about marriage, divorce or marriage status?? In reality, **“the husband of ONE WIFE”** speaks clearly and precisely about marriage—agreeing exactly with God's clearly stated design for marriage.

**VIGILANT**— temperate, sober, mentally alert. Having a well-disciplined mind, in possession of the full use of all his faculties.

**SOBER**— sound mind, sensible, serious, "in his right mind" (Mark 5:15), having a serious attitude. There is a need for balance here. He is not to have the reputation of always cracking jokes and being a clown (Eph. 5:4), nor is he to be one who casts a cloud of gloom everywhere he goes. A serious attitude can be blended with a healthy and Christ-honoring sense of humor.

**OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR**— orderly, organized, a well-arranged, and well-ordered life (opposite of "chaos"). A man who is disciplined and faithful in his stewardship of time. His life should exhibit good planning and purpose.

**GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY**— a lover of strangers. A real love and concern for people. One who manifests a genuine love for the brethren. His door and his heart are always open when it comes to rightly ministering to the needs of others.

**APT TO TEACH**— able, skilled, and willing to teach and communicate God's truth. According to Titus 1:9 he must be able to exhort and bring conviction by sound doctrine, "holding fast the faithful word." It is the ability, (by giftedness, labor, and prayer), to rightly use and communicate God's Word in helping, and confronting, and admonishing others (see 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17).

**1 TIMOTHY 3:3— NOT GIVEN TO WINE**— literally, "not beside or alongside wine." No affinity for wine. In a society infatuated with alcoholic beverages and defiled by the unwholesome things associated with drinking, total abstinence from alcoholic drinks and avoidance of any wrong or questionable association is the only truly safe choice for the elder.

**NOT A STRIKER**— not quick tempered to fight. The man must not be a fighter (ready with his fists). Comes from a verb meaning "to strike."— You rub this kind of violent person the wrong way and he will really let you have it.

**NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE**— not someone who is out for personal gain and profit. The man's financial dealings must be blameless and not in the least bit questionable. Free from greed.

**PATIENT**— gentle, forbearing (Phil. 4:5), sweet-reasonableness, considerate of the feelings of others, a man who is able to yield and who does not

always insist on having things his own way, willing to concede, and yet not compromise when it comes to truth.

**NOT A BRAWLER**— not a fighter (literally "without war"), not one who is always arguing and getting involved in carnal disputes and quarrels. A man who is peaceable (Rom. 12:18).

**NOT COVETOUS**— literally, "not a lover of money" (Heb. 13:5). The ruling motive in his life is not money or possessions, but the glory of God.

**1 TIMOTHY 3:4-5— RULES WELL HIS OWN HOUSE**— Without question, this has to first be in operation with his wife— he must model godly managing and guiding his house hold by first of all loving his wife as Christ loves the church. (Ephesians 5:21, 25-32); overflowing into having children who are obedient and respectful and well-disciplined (kept in line).

**1 TIMOTHY 3:6— NOT A NOVICE**--not one who has newly come to the faith, not a new convert, not one who has recently become a Christian, not a new believer, but rather one who has had years of growth and development in the faith (well tested by time).

**1 TIMOTHY 3:7— A GOOD REPORT**--an excellent testimony before the unsaved, a good reputation among the community.

**NOTE:** The other passage which list the qualifications of bishops (elders) is found in Titus 1:5-9 and is similar in many respects to the 1 Timothy 3:1-7 passage.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

The seven men chosen to serve in Acts 6:1-6 were likely the first deacons ever to be appointed in the church— although the word *diakonos* or any form of it is **NOT USED IN Acts 6**.

The word "DEACON" means "servant" and refers to one who humbly serves the local assembly, caring especially for the MANY and varied physical needs of the assembly. This allows those with shepherding responsibilities to give themselves more fully to prayer and the Word of God (Acts 6:1-7).

That the early "deacons" were spiritual men is clearly seen by the fact that both Stephen and Philip were 'deacons' (Acts 6:5). Philip served as a 'deacon' (Acts 6:5) but was also gifted as an evangelist (Acts 21:8; compare Eph. 4:12).

**ACTS 6:3— AMONG YOU**--a deacon must be a believer, a saved person.

**OF HONEST REPORT**—must have a good reputation and an excellent testimony.

**FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**—a spiritual man, controlled by God the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-6:1; Eph. 5:18).

**FULL OF WISDOM**—the ability to judge rightly and follow a sound course of action by way of knowledge and experience; the ability to apply God's Word to life's situations and problems.

**WHOM WE MAY APPOINT OVER THIS BUSINESS**— able to do the job, competent.

**1 TIMOTHY 3:8— GRAVE**--dignified, serious, respected, a man people look up to, a good example, a good testimony, a man of character.

**NOT DOUBLETONGUED**— not "say one thing and mean another" and not one who says one thing to one person and then something different to another person. He must say what he means and mean what he says. A man whose words can be trusted and whose motives will not be suspected. One who is honest, truthful, and sincere.

**NOT GIVEN TO MUCH WINE**— not addicted to wine. Because drinking is such a problem today, we insist that the deacon be a man who does not drink any alcoholic beverages at all in light of the stumbling block principle of Romans 14:21.

**NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE**— literally "shameful gain." See above discussion under 1 Timothy 3:3. He must be a man you could fully trust to take care of your money.

**1 TIMOTHY 3:9— HOLDING THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH IN A PURE CONSCIENCE.** The mystery of the faith refers to Christian truth. "The faith" is that whole body of truth that we believe (Jude 3). The "mystery of the faith" is more specific and involves those aspects of the faith that relate to church truth (compare 1 Timothy 3:14-16). A deacon must have the right concept of the local church. He must see the local assembly as God sees it— a living organism under the sovereign Headship and Lordship of Christ.

**1 TIMOTHY 3:10— PROVEN MEN**--to be put to the test for approval. Time must be allowed before the judgment is made that this man should be a deacon. Give the man time to show his faithfulness and prove himself

worthy of the office. The same should be true for the elder as indicated by the phrase "not a novice" (1 Timothy 3:6).

**BLAMELESS**— un-accused, "one who can't be called in." His life is so consistent and faithful that he will not need to be called in before the church to answer for some questionable action or behavior or deed.

**1 TIMOTHY 3:12**— **THE HUSBANDS OF ONE WIFE**--see discussion under 1 Timothy 3:2.

**RULING THEIR CHILDREN/HOUSES WELL**— see discussion under 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

## **BUT WHO CAN MEASURE UP TO SUCH STANDARDS?**

One of the most fundamental principles of Scripture is **that we all fall short of God's glory and perfection.** While godly maturity and Christlikeness should be the goal or target of every believer and while one of the goals of every ministry and its leadership should be to bring its people into higher and higher stages of godly maturity (cf. [Col. 1:28](#)), still, no matter how mature or how godly one becomes, none of us even comes close to perfection.

Do you remember David's plea in [Psalm 143:3](#)? David, a man after God's own heart and a leader of God's people, when praying for God's help said: "And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant, **For in Thy sight no man living is righteous.**"

Paul also brought out this truth in [Philippians 3:10-16](#). The goal, indeed, the mark we are all **to pursue as did Paul** is spiritual maturity, being conformed to the character of the Lord Jesus, **but no matter how much we have attained that goal, there will always be plenty of room and need for more growth and change.**

No person has ever attained full maturity except the Lord Jesus Himself!

### **So, what does this truth and fact mean?**

(1) It means there will always be room for improvement and growth in the qualities mentioned in these passages. *Being "above reproach" is not a demand for perfection before selection.* If that were so, no man would ever be qualified.

(2) However, it teaches us that being above reproach in relation to these qualities means that a man's life-style is such that, **generally speaking**, no one can legitimately accuse him of conduct which is unbecoming a mature believer; and/or of which when there was failure— he confessed, repented, made restitution if needed or possible, and now walks in deliverance/victory.

(3) It means that these qualities should exist in a man's life to such a degree that they stand out as prominent and consistent characteristics. They are clearly distinguishable, but there will be room for growth and times when he may fall short.

(4) It means that, because none of us is perfect, we should not expect our leaders to walk on water. They all have feet of clay.

(5) However, being above reproach does mean we should look for those men who are mature and examples of Christlikeness, and we should expect them to continue to grow.

#### **REMEMBER:**

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**We believe that there is no better evangelistic tool, mission's  
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Or counseling program than the image of God displayed through  
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