

## BAPTIST POLITY

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The office of deacon is one that does not get much attention in the church other than the annual election process. The purpose of this paper is to outline the qualifications of the office of a deacon and then to discuss the functions of that office. This will be accomplished primarily by outlining the two key passages on the subject 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7.

### Qualifications of the Office of a Deacon

1 Timothy 3:8-12

After concluding the discussing and outline of the qualifications of the pastor/elder of the local church, Paul next begins to outline the qualifications of the office of a deacon. Nowhere in the passage does Paul give any idea of the number of men who ought to serve in this capacity in any given church, but it is clear that whoever is chosen to fill this role in a local body of believers, must meet the following qualifications.

Vs 8: Likewise deacons must be:

1. Grave.

Reverent, honorable. The idea here is a deacon must be a man of dignity, one that has honorable character. Not that he is always serious and never has any fun, but that he knows how to take the things of God seriously.

2. Not double-tongued.

Not a hypocrite, not someone who says one things and lives another. He must be consistent in his words and actions. In his position he will be privy to information regarding church members and church affairs that he will have to be a man who can be trusted to tell the truth.

3. Not given to much wine.

Although this is not a complete prohibition against the drinking of alcohol, it is a prohibition that he be man who is not characterized by being controlled by outside influences, like alcohol.

4. Not greedy of filthy lucre.

He must be a man who is not driven by greed of money. He is to hold a position that will bring to him opportunities to be involved in the church's finances. He must be defined by a character that in the area of money is above reproach.

Vs. 9:

5. Holding the mystery of the faith in pure conscience.

The man who is to fill the office of a deacon is to be a man of spiritual character. Although his function will not be defined by spiritual ministry, in the sense of teaching, preaching, etc. he is still to be a man who has a pure conscience before God and his fellow church members in the areas of his spiritual walk with the Lord.

Vs. 10: And let those also be

6. first proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

The church must be cautious not to place a man in this position who has not had the opportunity to prove himself in the ministries of the church. He must first be proved, so as to determine whether he truly has the qualifications described in this passage.

Vs. 11: Even so must their wives be

The verses are not requiring a man to be married or have children in order to be a deacon, however it is showing the importance that is placed on his family.

7. Grave

This is the same word used in verse 8 to describe the deacon. His wife, if married, must be honorable and reverent in her character as well.

8. not slanderers

Given the fact that a wife of a deacon will become privy to much of the information about families in the church and church business, she must be a woman who is characterized by holding her tongue. She must not be given to gossip or slander.

9. sober

Her demeanor must be that of a person who takes the things of God seriously. Again, not in the sense that she cannot have fun, but one who is characterized as one with a "meek and quiet spirit."

10. faithful in all things.

She must be a woman who is dependable and one that can be trusted.

Vs. 12: Let the deacon be

11. The husband of one wife

The deacon must be characterized as “a one woman kind of man”, one who’s relationship with women is above reproach. It should be know publicly that he loves his wife and has a relationship with her that is to be emulated. He must be very cautious of his contact with other women in the church while fulfilling his role as deacon, so as not to give any impression of impropriety.

For a single, his life should be characterized as above reproach when it comes to his relationships with women.

12. ruling their children well

The deacon’s relationship with his children must be consistent with the mandates of Scripture. He must guide them with both nurture and admonition. He must be faithful in his responsibility as a father in shepherding them in such a way to guide them toward God and to help develop spiritual character in them.

13. ruling their household well.

All the other aspects of his management of his household/home affairs must be consistent with God’s Word. He must manage his home in such a way so as not to bring reproach on himself, his family, his church, office or God.

Functions of the Office of a Deacon  
Acts 6:1-7

Although the office of the deacon is not actually named or mentioned in Acts 6, the function of those who fill that office is best described here.

The functions of the office of a deacon comes directly from the Greek word:

διακονεω: To serve, to take care of, to wait upon.

The situation at hand was that the apostles (the pastors of the early church) found themselves not only having to meet the spiritual needs of the people, by praying and preaching/teaching God’s Word, but there was an increasing demand from the people to meet their physical needs. In attempting to do all of that, it was brought to the apostles attention that they were overlooking some of the members of the congregation. Determined to meet all the needs of the people, the apostles organized a way to ensure that this be accomplished.

They instructed the church to choose seven men who would have the primary responsibility of serving the people (literally “to deacon”).

These men were to be “of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (similar to the qualifications described above), who would be responsible to fulfill the task of serving the people, so the apostles could focus on pray and teaching/preaching.

This was not to say that the pastors are not concerned with serving and the deacons are not concerned with spiritual issues, but this is what defines their role. The pastors are to be servant leaders as they follow Christ’s example, and the deacons are to be men of spiritual integrity (“full of the Spirit and of wisdom”), but the pastor should be focused on prayer and preaching, while the deacon is focussed on serving and meeting the physical needs of the congregation.

The exact functions of the deacon will vary from place to place depending on the size of the congregation, location, etc. However, their overall responsibility is to serve the pastor(s) by serving the people in the areas of their physical needs, in order to free up the pastor to fulfill his primary responsibility of praying and teaching/preaching.