

# 1 Timothy

## I. Introduction

- A. **1 Timothy 3:8-15** . . . Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, [9] but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. [10] These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. [11] Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. [12] Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. [13] 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. [14] I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; [15] but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.
- B. Just to remind you, **1 Timothy 3:1-13**, describes the qualifications for overseers (elders/pastors), deacons and deaconesses. And these qualifications are primarily focused on the character and spiritual maturity of those serving in these positions.
1. The reason these qualifications are so important for churches is so they have leaders who live according to God's word, who assure the integrity of the message, who strive to promote and protect the spiritual health of the church, who humbly serve, who speak the truth in love, and who lead those they serve to Christian maturity.
    - a. We see description of this system **Ephesians 4:11-13**, "[God] gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."
    - b. However, all of us can use these lists as reminders of what a Christian ought to be. And so we can use these lists to examine our own character and spiritual maturity – even as we use them to determine who should lead us.

2. Finally, the more spiritually healthy and mature you are, the easier it is for you to discern who is and who isn't qualified to be in a leadership position.

### C. Pray

## II. The spiritual health of the church and the role of deacons

### A. [11] **Women** must **likewise** be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

1. Though there is some debate among commentators as to who Paul is referring to in **vs 11**, the most likely conclusion is the deaconesses.
  - a. One of the supporting reasons for this is the word "likewise" which is also used in **vs 8** to note the change from overseer to deacon. So here in **vs 11** we can take it to note the change from male deacons to women deacons, or deaconesses.
  - b. According to church history, deaconesses were generally responsible for visiting women who were sick, providing meals to those in need, assisting in the baptism of women, teaching the younger women how to love their husbands and children, acting as **doorkeepers for the women's entrance (Ex. 38:8)** to the church, keeping order among the women inside and outside the church, and caring for the orphans.
    - (1) **Exodus 38:8**, "Moreover, he made the laver of bronze with its base of bronze, from the mirrors of the serving women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting."
  - c. Though, generally speaking, women seemed susceptible to the false teaching, those who meet the qualifications for deaconess would be spiritually mature enough to resist the allure of such deceptions – which mean they too would be able to protect the integrity of the message and the spiritual health of the church.
  - d. Finally, it is probable that given men's susceptibility to moral failure, the church established the position of deaconess to put a safer distance between the male leaders and the women being served by the church.

### 2. **Deaconesses must be dignified,**

- a. This first requirement for deaconesses is almost the same as the first requirement for deacons (**vs 8**). Therefore, just like deacons, a deaconess is to be the kind of woman whose life, speech, listening skills, compassion, respect for others, honesty with others, leadership, and service is honorable and dignified, and therefore worthy of respect and trust.

- b. And a deaconess's life, as much as her words, ought to inspire the women they serve to continue growing in godliness and love.
3. **Deaconesses must not be malicious gossips**
- a. This second requirement for deaconesses is similar to the second requirement for deacons – who are not to be double-tongued.
  - b. According to the NT, church history, and my experiences as a pastor, women are more likely than men to be involved in gathering and passing on information about others that either ought not be passed on or does not need to be passed on. In other words, women are more prone than men to gather and disseminate gossip type information.
  - c. Interestingly, Paul uses the phrase **malicious gossips** – a phrase that is used only three times in the NT – here in **vs 11**, in **2 Timothy 3:3**, and in **Titus 2:3**.
    - (1) The word gossip, by itself, is used once – in **Romans 1:29**.
    - (2) The word gossips is used once in **2 Corinthians 12:20**.
    - (3) And the phrase gossips and busybodies is used once in **1 Timothy 5:13**.
    - (4) The only other place the word gossip appears is in **Proverbs 20:19**, “He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip.”
  - d. The requirement here in **vs 11** is that a deaconess must not be a **malicious gossip**.
    - (1) It is possible Paul adds the adjective malicious because a deaconess is likely to hear a condemning, heartbreaking, or disturbing story about a person or situation in a woman's life – a story that ought to be dealt with, but not passed around.
    - (2) When we hear a condemning story about a parent, sibling, spouse, child, employer, co-worker, or neighbor, it is easy to conclude (1) that the story teller is good while the one whom the story is being told about is bad, and (2) that the story teller is the victim while the one whom the story is being told about is the problem.
    - (3) However, there are two side to every story, and to pass one side along without hearing the other side to balance out the truth opens the door to slander and the unfair defamation of a person's reputation. And this is malicious gossip.
  - e. Whether you are an overseer, deacon, deaconess, or a believer who is not in a position of leadership, you will hear stories from those who are hurting – stories which often paint the story teller

as the victim and the ones hurting the story teller as the abuser or problem.

(1) Listening is not wrong. In fact, it may be the kindest thing to do in such a situation. But taking sides or deciding who is guilty and who is innocent based on hearing only one side is wrong. As Christians, let us be impartial even while being compassionate, sympathetic, and helpful.

(2) However, if after hearing such a story you share it with someone who doesn't need to know, or you share it in a way that makes one side look good and the other evil, this is malicious gossip.

(3) Therefore, let us guard against all gossip, but especially malicious gossip, for this is the way of love (**1 Peter 4:8**).

#### 4. **A deaconess must be temperate**

a. Just like the first two requirements, this third requirement of being temperate is similar to the third requirement for a deacon – which says a deacon must not be addicted to much wine.

b. To be temperate is to be sober-minded or seriously guarded against over-indulging your passions and appetites, as well as keeping your emotions in check.

c. To this end, temperance requires being thoughtful and vigilantly aware of your thoughts, feelings, momentary urges, words, and deeds in order to prevent yourself from being stirred or shocked into doing something wrong or shameful or dishonoring to God.

#### 5. **A deaconess must be faithful in all things.**

a. This requirement might well be similar to both the overseer's and deacon's requirement of being above reproach. To be faithful **in all things**, as a Christian woman, means several things:

(1) It means being responsible, dependable, humble, gracious, and cheerful when doing your duties as a deaconess, and as a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a daughter-in-law, a friend, and a neighbor.

(2) It means keeping your word, fulfilling your vows, and remaining true to your commitments in the church, and in your marriage, your home, and your community.

(3) To be faithful means interacting with people in a manner that shows impartiality, honesty, love, respect, tenderness, and compassion for them and their situation.

(4) It means being modest in your outward appearance.

(5) And it means behaving in the church, the home, and the community in ways that honor God, are according to God's word, and uphold your own dignity so that you cannot be rightfully condemned or shown to be ungodly.

B. [13] Those who have served well as deacons and deaconesses obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

1. Without question, righteousness has its rewards. We see this truth conveyed in **Deuteronomy 28**, which lists the blessings and the curses. And quoting **Psalm 34:15-16**, Peter reminds NT believers of this same truth, "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (**1 Peter 3:12**).

2. Here in **vs 13**, Paul applies this truth to church leaders who serve well, stating that they will obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

a. The **high standing** most probably means a high standing with God. This perspective is supported by at least two other portions of scripture.

(1) **Matthew 25:21**, "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'"

(2) **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, [13] each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. [14] If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. [15] If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

(3) In my opinion, to gain high standing with God is to gain a treasure of invaluable worth.

b. Obtaining **great confidence in the faith** that is in Christ Jesus most probably means –

(1) Obtaining an unwavering confidence that you have the provision of God's empowerment, and His provision of

wisdom, insight, and understanding for dealing with people and situations in the church.

(2) It also means confidently trusting God to lead you into all truth, to give you a proper knowledge of His word, and to teach you how to apply His word in the most practical ways possible, and to enable you to live accordingly.

(3) The outcome of this great confidence in and dependence on God is the strong conviction that God's ways work, that His word holds the needed truths for living a sane, godly life, that He is your source for everything necessary for life and godliness, that you are safe in His hands regardless of how those you are serving respond, and that continuing to trust Him as you serve Him and represent Him is your only realistic, workable, and practical option.

c. In my opinion, this kind of confident faith is not only for church leaders, it is for every one of us.

C. [14] I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; [15] but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how [leaders and non-leaders] ought to conduct [or behave themselves] in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

1. Beginning at **1 Timothy 1:3-3:13**, Paul's primary emphasis is on the spiritual health of the church, and what has to be done to make it healthy and keep it healthy.

2. He concludes this emphasis with these lists of qualifications for overseers, deacons, and deaconesses – church leaders who are specifically tasked with protecting the integrity of the message and the health of the church.

3. In the final three chapters, Paul's basic emphasis is reminding Timothy what he must do to fulfill his duties as the primary leader in the church. And in doing so, Paul is telling us how we are to conduct ourselves in the household of God.

### III. Conclusion

A. In conclusion, I want to comment on three statements in **vs 15**.

B. **The household of God** –

1. In the introduction to his gospel John writes, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (**John 1:12**). And in his first

- epistle he writes, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).
2. As children of God, we are members of God’s household, and His household is represented here on earth by individual churches and the universal church.

**C. The church (assembly or congregation) of the living God,**

1. This phrase reminds us that neither the local church nor the universal church is a building or a denomination – but rather it is a living and active organism – that is, a congregation of people in which God, himself, dwells.
2. Therefore, every member of God’s household can know God, talk to God, hear from God, and fellowship with God.

**D. The pillar and support of the truth.**

1. As we have seen throughout **1 Timothy 1-3**, the church is to protect the integrity of the message through godly leadership, biblically accurate teaching, prayer, love for one another, godly living, and the growth of individual believers to the maturity of Christ.
2. It is in this way that the church is the pillar and support of the truth – which is God’s truth.