

Deacon Qualifications

The Church at South Mountain

While all believers are characterized by service, some have been specifically gifted by the Spirit of God to serve (*Rom.12:7*). Only in 1 Timothy 3 is there specific discussion of the office of deacon (*vv.8-10, 12*). Deacons are equally qualified with elders in terms of character and spiritual life. The one difference between their qualifications is that an elder must be able to teach, but a deacon does not have to be. The elders oversee the work of those who serve the Lord, and they are assisted in their work by deacons.

- **He must be a man of dignity.** The Greek term translated "*dignity*" means worthy of respect, stately, dignified. It denotes a seriousness of mind and character. A deacon must be worthy of respect and serious-minded, not treating serious things lightly.
- **He must not be double-tongued.** He is always consistent and righteous in what he says. He is not to be one who says one thing to one person and something else to another. He knows how to bridle his tongue and is not a malicious gossip.
- **He must not be addicted to much wine.** He is to be characterized by clear thinking and self-control.
- **He must not be fond of gain.** His goals in life are not to be monetary. 1 Timothy 6:9 says that a pervasive desire for financial gain corrupts a man.
- **He must be doctrinally sound.** 1 Timothy 3:9 says that he must hold "*to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.*" "*The faith*" refers to the whole Christian truth. "*A clear conscience*" is the result of obeying the truth. He must hold to the faith and apply the truth in his life.
- **He must be active in spiritual service.** "*These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach*" (1 *Tim.3:10*). The verb translated "*be tested*" speaks of an ongoing test, not a single test or probationary period. The test is an ongoing general assessment by the church of his service to Christ. Before being affirmed as a deacon, he must prove himself to be faithful in serving the Lord.
- **He must be morally pure.** His life is to be "*beyond reproach*" (*v.10*). Like an elder, a deacon must be morally pure, having an irreproachable character. Verse 12 echoes the standard of moral purity, for it says, "*Deacons must be husbands of only one wife.*" A deacon must be totally consecrated and devoted to his wife.
- **He must lead a godly family.** He must be a good manager of his children and household. The proving ground for leadership is how a man manages his children and home, and the way that a man cares for his children and home is an indicator of his ability to care for God's church.

Although specific personal and spiritual qualifications must be met by those in the offices of elder and deacon, that does not mean the standard is lower for anyone else in the congregation. These qualifications should be a goal and guideline for every believer; everyone should seek to have them in his life whether he is a recognized, office-holding believer or simply a servant to the Body of Christ.

Process for Affirming Deacons at CASM

1. **Assess the need** for additional deacons to serve the body. (*Acts 6:1*)
2. **Inform congregation** of biblical qualifications and encourage participation in identifying those who may qualify. (*Acts 6:2-3*)
3. **Elders prayerfully review** nominations to discern spiritual fitness according to 1 Timothy 3:8-13. [Five areas are considered: personal character (*v.8*), spiritual life (*v.9*), biblical service (*v.10a*), moral purity (*v.10b*), and home life (*v.12*).]
4. **Those who are qualified** are then contacted to discern willingness. Once consensus is reached by the elders about the potential nominees' fitness and willingness, the names of the nominees are brought before the congregation for affirmation. A brief period of time (two weeks) is given to the congregation to deal with any unknown issue(s) that might hinder the prospective elder/deacon from serving in his role beyond reproach. (Members are encouraged to go to the nominee personally, according to Matthew 18.) This is an attempt to avoid affirming anyone too quickly (*Cf. 1 Tim.5:22, 24-25*). If there is some scandalous or public sin that would disqualify the nominee, the congregation is directed to contact the elders so that those who are unqualified are not ordained.
5. **Once the nominee is affirmed** by the elders and the congregation, then a training process will follow.

