

<b>Series</b>	Gamma 17 – Study 6
<b>Reference</b>	1 Timothy 3: 8-16
<b>Date</b>	26 May 2021
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Welcome back to Gamma 17. We are looking through the pastoral epistles where Paul writes to Timothy and Titus in Crete, as well as in Ephesus. This is study six. Last week, we went into gospel leadership looking at elders, this week we are going to be looking at deacons, who they are. 1-Timothy chapter 3, verses 8 to 16.

So, we are still looking at gospel leadership. Last week we dealt with the elders, this week we are going to deal with deacons, the two tiered gospel leadership.

What is a deacon?

What is the criteria for a deacon and what role do they play in church governance?

**What is a deacon?**

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.

So what 'diakanos' is the word, and this is a word which means servant. It is 29 times in the New Testament and in four of these, including this particular letter and passage, it is basically as an office holder. The other one is in Romans, Philippians and rest of Timothy.

Now, Phoebe, a woman was also a Deaconess.

**Romans 16:1** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae

Diakanos is basically the male version word. The word deaconess only came in a couple of hundred years later on.

Paul writes to the Philippian church,

**Phil 1:1** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

Two tier leadership. So gospel leadership is always two tiered. The earliest protos deacons, although they're not actually called deacons with that technical word, but in all manner in which they were chosen and which they actually acted they were actually the earliest deacons.

**Acts 6:5** And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

So basically typical commissioning is laying hands and praying over them, and these are the earliest

deacons and actually got deacons out because they arose out of a problem. The people who were the Greek widows were not well looked after, they had needs and so therefore the apostles had to look after their physical needs, to feed them, to counsel them, doing all sorts of things, as well as preach the gospel and look after teaching. And so therefore they couldn't cope. So, and they said,

**Acts 6:2** It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables

Which means to look after people practical ministry. So therefore there was a split and they formed a second tier of actual worker. So in Acts chapter six, you've got apostles who minister the word and the deacons who do practical ministry, visiting people, hospital, feeding the poor, office administration work as it were, and so therefore it is based on this kind of pattern that we have elders who do the ministry of the word and teaching and preaching. And then you've got deacons who do the practical ministries as well.

Now, I just want to digress to the same passage and look at verse 11. Here we have, And their wives likewise must be dignified, et cetera and all that. I don't think this should be translated wives because there is a controversy. Either this is going to be translated as deacon's wives and or female deacons. There is a reason why I think that this describes female deacons.

If you look in your Bibles, some of the Bibles will have

**Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers but sober-minded, faithful in all things.**

The word their is actually supplied by the translators of the English Standard Version. The actual word

**Gynaikas likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, sober-minded, faithful in all things.**

Remember **Gynaikas** can be women or can be wives. So this is the original readings. So basically the context determines the meaning isn't it. So in this particular case, it is women, which is basically women deacons. If Paul meant it to be their wives. He would have added the Greek word 'Auton', which means

**Gynaikas Auton likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, sober-minded, faithful in all things.**

So Paul would have added that and he didn't add that. The other word is Diakanos or male deacons,

**1 Tim 3:8 "Diakanos" likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 "Gynaikas" likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.**

Which means the likewise indicates two categories of deacons. Here you have got description of the overseer and elder, then you have got deacons likewise must be dignified. Gynaikas (woman deacons) likewise must be dignified. So likewise would indicate there are two categories of deacons rather than the deacon's wives, and if you look at the qualifications of the deacon and the female deacons, they are similar; dignified, not double tongue, not slanderers, not addicted to wine, sober-minded, faithful in all things and hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. Similar qualifications for males as well as females. So the similarity of qualifications suggests an office and not just as a status as a deacon's wives.

And the other question is that why would the qualifications for the deacons wives be stated when that of the overseers be left out. Don't you think that the wives, the qualifications of the wives of the elders

will be more important than the qualifications of the wives of the deacons? It doesn't make sense. So therefore, it is more likely that these are actually deaconesses. So that's what a deacon is.

### **What is the criteria for deacon or Deaconess?**

Well, desire probably safe to assume because in Christian ministry, you can't force anybody to do the ministry. They should desire to do so, but it is not stated but it is safe to assume. Then the qualifications, situational or moral. We look at, they must be husband of one wife, which means same thing, one woman man. Faithful, protection against sexually immorality, manages household well, which means with some degree of managerial skill and able to keep the family intact. They must be dignified, which means honorable, respectable and worthy. They must not be double tongue. Say one thing twice, which means say one thing to one person and go to another person say something else, which means got two face.

This is used to manipulate situation for their own benefit, and this is a problem in Baptist churches. Baptist churches, one member comes and tells you something and you say, yeah, yeah, yeah, and another member comes and says, yeah as well. And the two members get together. They say, ah, this fellow double tongue. And that has often happened because of the pressure of saying yes to people in church. And so that is a real pressure on full-time workers, the pressure on any office of the church. So they must not be addicted to much wine or no greedy for dishonest gain, which is quite obvious. They would hold the mystery of the faith with clear conscience.

The mystery of the faith is actually the gospel.

### **1 Tim 1:18 holding faith and a good conscience.-Faith that produces good works.**

If not his conscience will speak against him. They still influence church. It doesn't mean they're not permitted to teach it. Deacons can teach, but they're not chosen because of their teaching ability and and deacons need to hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. When you contrast that with the false teachers, the false teachers have their consciences are seared. Well, the deacons have a clear conscious, which means their actions are aligned with their faith Where else, if you are a false teacher, their actions are out of alignment with basically the inner compass, which is basically the conscience. All right.

Similar qualifications for the female deacons, they are dignified, they don't go around gossiping about people, saying bad things. They are sober-minded, which means they are temperate, which means they are not simply emotional and going off in a tangent and they are faithful, which means in all things they are trustworthy. Which means you tell them to do something, you give them a task and they carry it out right up to the end. All right. Character qualifications are, I believe either an overseers, deacons, deaconesses are all interchangeable. You look at that, you have elder, deacon, deaconess, respectable, dignified, not a drunkard, not addicted to much wine, sober-minded, not quarrelsome, not double tongue, not slanderers, not lovers of money, not greedy for dishonest gain and trustworthy. They are all the same. Paul is this describing the respectable church member.

Because would you appoint a deacon if he was violent and not gentle or bad reputation? Not above reproach after all that was not stated, doesn't mean it doesn't apply. Or would you appoint them straight away?

### **1 Timothy 3:10 (ESV) And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.**

So therefore, before you actually appoint them for deacons, they need to be tested. So this is First Baptist structure. You've got elders, you got deacons and then you've got other leaders and all of these are under called the Assembly of Leaders where people here will eventually transition into either become deacons or they become elders or deacons become elders in this particular structure.

The concept of leadership in biblical terms is basically desire, character and gifting. In secular terms, it is similar but the focus in secular leadership is not on their character. They don't think to see this is important, and this is a disaster. If you look at the last president of United States, a lot of Christians supported him because he got good policies. He is against abortion, et cetera. But you can find if you've got a bad character, you tell lies all the time, this happens in the end.

Spirit filling produces character.

**Acts 6:3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.**

How do you know he is full of the spirit? You look at this character because the fruit of the spirit were found in character. That's why criteria for leadership always is character.

Lastly, spiritual capability. Well deacons not mentioned at all. You can actually imply it, comparing it to deacons of overseers, able to teach, deacons no necessity to teach, although it doesn't preclude it. Alright. Apostles focus on a ministry of the word. Deacons, for example, acts chapter six, look at Acts chapter 6 paradigm, the early deacons practical ministry. They look after the Greek widows, supportive function there.

**Acts 8: 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.**

He did miracles. So it doesn't preclude him sharing the gospel. It doesn't preclude him actually preaching it, but that's not the primary reason for which he was actually chosen.

So the elders must manage his household with dignity and keeping his children submissive. Deacons also must manage their children and their own households well, but the difference is that elders is also same

**5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?**

You don't see this applied to a deacon, which means the elder differs from the deacons in the sense that they actually have an overall care or basically authority over God's church. There is a reason why elders cannot be a recent convert. Why? Because conceit comes with power. Power causes conceit. So therefore he must not be an recent convert because otherwise he will be puffed up be conceit and fall in the condemnation of the devil.

So here you've got overseers, they teach and they lead and they shepherd. The Deaconess knows necessity to teach, although they can, and they're basically supportive in their functions.

**Do we need to become a deacon before you become an elder?**

Well, both offices have different functions and different giftings. See in the New Testament churches,

the elders are appointed first, not a deacons. So, if you are appointed first, so therefore you can't be a deacon and then become an elder. In the New Testament church, they appoint elders first. Elders must not be a recent convert. So, if you're not a recent convert, you wouldn't have progress from a deaconship and then go up and become elder.

Deacons serve the church, they don't serve the elders.

So the FBC structure, again; Assembly of leaders and basically there is a whole pool of leaders and the leaders, if they have a preaching and teaching function they will straight away go to become elders. If they're not recent convert or deacons, if they are doing supportive function but that doesn't preclude deacons also going up to become elders as well. The structure is flexible. All right.

The most important thing of all gifts in offices in the church is what they do.

Ephesians 4:11-13 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up 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 mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Gospel ministry is elders and deacons in the whole church, equipping, making sure that the laity, all of us in a congregation are equipped to love each other, to build each other, to minister to the world and bring the gospel. Thank you. I hope to see you again with gamma next week.