

## 6. Learning to Become Qualified for Spiritual Leadership – Part 2

In our last topic, we saw the qualifications that we want to help our physical and spiritual children develop in their lives in order to help them become godly spiritual leaders. We saw that those qualifications were the qualifications for the spiritual leadership team of a local church. We also saw that the words used to describe those leaders were “elders”, “bishops” or “overseers”. They are to lead people and not drive them. A person leads by love and example while a person drives by fear or even anger. In this topic, we are going to see the qualifications for deacons and discuss some of the differences between deacons and elders in the local church.

Acts 2:46 says, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” Five times in the first five chapters of Acts we see that the church was of “one accord”. Then, we see a sudden change in Acts 6:1. In Acts 6:1, we read, “Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” Suddenly, we see that there were complaints in the church. At this point, the church was all Jewish. However, the Hellenist-(Greek) speaking Jews had a complaint against the Hebrew-speaking Jews. The Greek-speaking widows were being neglected when food was distributed to the widows. To solve this problem, we see that all seven of the men who were appointed have Greek names so they were probably all Hellenists.

The apostles probably remembered how Christ had begun to share responsibilities with them to help them develop their leadership. At the feeding of the five thousand, Christ had multiplied the food but he had given the twelve the responsibility to pass out the food. As a result, the apostles said they should not add distributing food to their primary responsibilities. Instead, Acts 6:3-4 says, “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The word translated “deacons” means *to serve* and was used in the New Testament to describe those who cared for the poor and distributed the money collected for their use. As a result, deacons are those who serve with the elders and take care of any responsibilities that the elders delegate to them.

As a result, we want to give our children opportunities to serve other Christians in ways that will benefit the entire church. In order to help them become qualified to lead in such ministries, we want to develop godly character in their lives. That is why 1 Timothy 3:8-10 says, “Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless.” The word that is translated “reverent” is used four times in the New Testament and means *those who are respected for their godly mind and character*.

The word that is translated “double-tongued” means *people who say one thing to one person and something different to another in an effort to deceive*. Since deacons are not to be double-tongued, it means that they are honest in the things that they say. Deacons are not to be individuals who

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spend time drinking. They are not to be “greedy for money”. This word is only used three times in the New Testament and the other two times are in the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 1:7. This would also be important for deacons as well as elders since elders often delegate responsibilities that involve the handling of money to deacons.

We also see certain qualifications are a part of developing deacons for future spiritual leadership. The word translated “holding” means *to have or to be closely joined to a person or thing*. The word translated “mystery” speaks of something that was hidden in the Old Testament that is revealed in the New Testament. “The faith” was used to refer to the teachings about Christ and the salvation that we have through Him. As a result, these words together speak about a person who firmly holds to the teachings about Christ that are revealed to us in the New Testament. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Here we see that a pure conscience is the result of pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace from the heart. Both deacons and elders are to hold to the Biblical teachings that cause their lives to be transformed.

The word translated “tested or proved” means *to examine a person’s beliefs and godly character* to make certain that his godly character and beliefs are genuine. Ephesians 5:8-10 says, “For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.” Those who have developed godly character in their lives will begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit. As a result, when the lives of men begin to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, it is time to give them opportunities to serve the whole church because of the fact that their lives have been found blameless.

We also see that the way that men lead their wife and family tells us many things about their progress in growing toward spiritual leadership. 1 Timothy 3:11-13 says, “Likewise *their* wives *must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Just like elders, we see that a key place for a man to develop his spiritual leadership is in the home. We saw in the qualifications for elders that the word translated “rules” means *one who has been set over something as a protector or guardian*. As a result, men are to learn to lead and protect their families well so that there will be honor instead of blame. One additional thing that the wife is to avoid is slander. The word “slander” means *to accuse falsely*. Here, we see that the husband and wife often serve the Lord as a team and this is an area where a wife has to learn to keep quiet and avoid gossip about sensitive situations.

Deacons that have a good ministry preserve for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith. “A good standing” is speaking of the fact that deacons who serve well gain the “*respect of the entire church*”. They also gain great freedom to speak and share with boldness the faith that we receive in Christ Jesus because their words and their actions are in agreement. Since one of the key differences in the requirements for deacons and elders is being able to teach the Word of God, we see that deacons who are faithful in serving the Lord are also developing the ability to

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teach the Word of God to others with boldness. This principle is illustrated by Stephen in Acts 6:9-10 as well as the entire chapter of Acts 7. Acts 6:9-10 says, “Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.” This would have been the synagogue that included Saul.

1 Timothy 3:14-16 says, “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” Paul looked forward to visiting Timothy so that they could minister to one another. However, Paul was uncertain when he would reach Ephesus so had written this letter to guide Timothy in his ministry.

Paul wanted Timothy to know how to conduct himself in the house of God or the house where God lives. Since there were not church buildings for the first three hundred years of the church, he was certainly not talking about a building. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Christians are the temple or the house where God lives. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Paul wanted Timothy to know how to do good, especially to all those who were a part of the household of faith. In the same way, we want to help our children learn to do good to all, especially to those who are Christians and a part of the household of faith. A physical temple or building had pillars and a foundation. We as Christians are the parts of the temple of God built on the foundation of Christ and we are to share the truth of the Word of God.

Paul concluded this section with an early hymn that gave a summary of what we believe. God wants to develop godliness in our lives. Christ became flesh and lived among us. We have been justified because we have been declared righteous in the sight of the Father because the righteousness of Christ has been placed upon us. Christ has been seen by angels because He is now in heaven. Christ said that this message is to be preached among all the nations beginning at Jerusalem and going to the very end of the earth. It is the plan of God for people of every nation and group of people in the world to have the opportunity to hear so that there will be some from every nation and tongue in heaven. Christ was taken up into heaven and He is now seated at the right hand of the Father where He is making intercession for each one of us. The things in this early hymn are all things that we want to help our children understand so that they become equipped to teach them to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children become qualified to serve the Lord more effectively.