

1 Timothy 3:8-16 – Qualifications of Deacons & the Mystery of Godliness

Michael Silva / June 4, 2017

Opening: Coach Wooden – Fundamentals, integrity.

- Hall of Famer John Wooden is known as one of the greatest coaches who ever lived, leading UCLA's men's basketball team to 10 national championships, including an astonishing seven straight from 1967 to 1973, a stretch that included 88 consecutive victories.ⁱ
- That's how he's *most* remembered.
- But perhaps he'll be *best* remembered as a [mentor](#), a [friend](#), a [loving husband](#) and [father](#), and a source of endless wisdom and grace to hundreds of [players](#), thousands of [coaches](#), and millions of [fans](#) and [admirers](#) through the decades and around the world.
- Wooden long said that his wisdom came primarily from two sources—his earthly father, Joshua Wooden, and from his heavenly Father.
- Wooden, a devout Christian, read his Bible daily. His favorite passage was 1 Corinthians 13.
- His success on the court has been largely attributed to his integrity and his focus on his faith and the fundamentals of basketball.
- Former NBA championship winning coach Jack Ramsay said of Coach Wooden, *“His attention to detail created routines that we all learned and adopted. Every day at practice, we did the things that he preached — running, balance, change of direction, ball handling, just about every fundamental facet of the game.”*
- John Wooden was also a deacon in his church and never missed a Sunday service.
- I'm highlighting Coach Wooden b/c he's one who modeled the attributes outlined in our passage today for one who serves as a deacon.

Transition: We are on a Journey... through the book of 1 Timothy, which has a lot to say about church leadership, doctrine, and **discipleship**.

1. Paul wrote this letter to young Pastor Timothy to encourage & instruct him in [how to deal with false teachers](#) within the church at Ephesus.
2. Throughout this letter, we will see that as disciples, we are to be [grounded](#) in and [guided](#) by the gospel and right doctrine.
 - a) As disciples of Christ, we are called to [live out the realities](#) of the gospel in our lives.

Let's read our passage: [1 Timothy 3:8-16 \(NKJV\)](#)ⁱⁱ And Pray...

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. - Psalm 19:14

1. Last week... The Qualifications of the Bishop/Pastor/Elder/Overseer.
2. Paul continues his instructions on qualifications of church leaders by saying **Likewise** in verse 8.
 - a) Many of the same qualifications of a bishop apply to a deacon.
3. Who is a deacon?
 - a) First, in **Ephesians 4:12** Paul explains the purpose of Spiritual Gifts: [They are] **for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,**
 - b) Every Christian should be involved in some work of ministry.
 - c) Therefore, the role of a deacon could and should be filled by every Christian who is serving in the church.
 - d) **1 Corinthians 12:4–7** ⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:
 - e) **John MacArthur** explains, “Everyone is a deacon in the general sense, some are specially gifted by the Holy Spirit for service, but still others hold the office of deacon. They model spiritual service for everyone else. They work alongside the elders, implementing their preaching, teaching, and oversight in the practical life of the church.”
 - i) These verses apply to everyone here today.

1 Timothy 3:8a ⁸ Likewise deacons *must be reverent,*

1. The word deacon is **διάκονος – diakonos** in the original Greek and it means servant or one who serves the needs of believersⁱⁱⁱ.
 - a) Being a deacon is rooted in servanthood.
2. A deacon is to be **reverent**. This word carries the idea of being serious in mind and in character.
 - a) ESV: Dignified; NIV: Worthy of Respect; NLT: Well Respected

1 Timothy 3:8b ...not double-tongued,

1. This means **saying one thing** to one person and **then something different** to another person.
 - a) The classic example of someone who is double-tongued is a **politician** who tells people what they want to hear and is constantly changing their story.

- b) A deacon's speech must **not** be **hypocritical**.
- i) They should be **sincere** and full of **integrity**.
- ii) "The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office." - Dwight D. Eisenhower

1 Timothy 3:8c ...not given to much wine,

- 1. Yet again, the issue of alcohol is addressed with church leadership.
 - a) Like elders, deacons should **not** be dependent upon alcohol to **unwind, relax,** or to **think clearly**.
 - b) Deacons, like elders must remember Paul's counsel in...

1 Corinthians 10:23–24 23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

- 2. Leaders are being watched by those who follow.
 - a) Moreover, leaders' actions are being copied by those who are watching.
 - i) Being a leader means adhering to a **higher expectation**.
 - ii) Don't do anything you would be **embarrassed** by if someone said they were copying you.

1 Timothy 3:8d not greedy for money,

- 1. We should be more focused on ministering to people rather than making money.
 - a) This doesn't mean deacons can't **make lots of money**, only that they should **not** be **greedy for money**.
 - b) Deacons are often not in paid positions in the church so this speaks of their mindset outside the church.
 - i) Serving as a deacon should not be a **resume** boosting bullet either.

1 Timothy 3:9 ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

- 1. The word **mystery** in the scriptures means a truth that was **previously hidden**, but **now revealed**.
 - a) The mystery is the God sent his Son to save sinners.

- b) But it's not enough to merely **know** that truth, deacons must **believe it, living out** those truths with a **pure conscience**.
 - i) A **defiled conscience** limits one's ability to serve in the church.
- c) You should be able to clearly see someone's faith being lived out in their lives without compromise before they are asked to serve as a deacon.

1 Timothy 3:10 ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found blameless*.

1. Like with elders who should **not** be a **novice**, no appointment to the office or role of a deacon should happen before that one is **tested** - *scrutinized, tried, proven*.
 - a) The word **tested** is in the **present tense**, indicating an **ongoing test**, and not just a one-time test.
 - b) Leaders in the church should be recognized by their **faith in action** before they are appointed to any recognized leadership role.
 - c) If you want to appoint a deacon, then look at **who is serving**. Who has simply been helpful in humility? How has made themselves available?
2. A real deacon is someone who has a **heart** for following God **regardless of the title**.
 - a) That's what God is looking for, someone whose heart is right with God.
 - b) The prophet **Samuel** thought he had found Israel's next king when he first laid his eyes on Jesse's eldest son...

1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

3. The word **blameless** in verse 10 can also be translated as **above reproach**. It means 'not held.'
 - a) The idea is that if an **accusation** were made there's **no way it could stick**.
 - b) Your life and conduct as a leader in the church should be such that people should **not** have any reason to **doubt, questions, or accuse** you of wrongdoing.
 - i) This means that deacons should be **spiritually mature**, something that is cultivated from **close faithful walk with the Lord**.
 - ii) No one is **flawless**, but deacons should be **blameless**.

1 Timothy 3:11 ¹¹ Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

1. The original language in this verse could be [translated as wives or women](#).
 - a) Some have suggested that this could be an inclusion of women as [Deaconesses](#).
 - b) In **Romans 16:1** Paul speaks of Phoebe who was a servant – diakonos, the same word.
 - c) Phoebe demonstrates that women can serve in the church in a non-teaching roll, helping others.
2. These could be the qualifications that apply to women who serve as [deaconesses](#) in addition to the list already given.
 - a) Or these may address [deacon's wives](#).
3. I think you could say this applies to either or both...
 - a) Both deacon's wives and deaconesses should be [reverent](#) like her husband.
 - b) She should not be a [slanderer](#).
 - i) Sadly, those in church leadership get unfairly treated by members of the church.
 - ii) Some members feel they can [vent](#) and [say mean & ugly things](#) to church leaders without any [filter or grace or love](#) and I'm not sure why.
 - iii) This can be hard to experience, especially for a wife to watch her husband get attacked by someone in the church.
 - (1) Therefore, they are instructed to not slander.
 - (2) Leaders in the church must be able to [forgive](#) and [love](#) the **unlovable**.
 - c) She should be [temperate](#) or marked by [moderation](#) in all things.
 - d) And [faithful in all things](#). The meaning of that is simple enough.

1 Timothy 3:12a ¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife,

1. In the original language, it's a one-woman man.
 - a) In the context of this passage, this is a [qualification](#), that addresses [moral character, not marital status](#).
 - b) What this means is that a man in leadership should be devoted to the woman who is his wife.
 - i) A common saying in the Greek culture in that day was that a man should have three different women in

his life...

- (1) A mistress for conversation, a concubine for pleasure, and a wife to bear his children.
- ii) Not so in the church. Deacons should be leading by example in loving their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. (Eph 5:25)

1 Timothy 3:12b ruling *their* children and their own houses well.

1. In the life of a church leader, his family must remain a top priority.
 - a) This verse is a reminder that while the needs in the church might be great, that the family is also a priority that must not be overlooked.
 - b) Deacons should first be good leaders in their homes before they are recognized as leaders in the church.

Let's look at some deacons in actions... the very first deacons in Acts 6:1-6

1. One of the main **differences** between the Elder and the Deacon in a church is that Elders should be **able to teach**.
 - a) The elders need to be committed to prayer, preaching, and teaching.
 - b) The church, our church needs servants, deacons who will help with ministering in practical matters to help free the elders to focus on spiritual matters.
 - c) The Apostles were **not above the task of serving others**, that's what they did during Jesus's earthly ministry.
 - i) It's that **the time had come** for them to focus on **new roles** of praying, preaching, and teaching.

1 Timothy 3:13 ¹³ 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.

1. The **reward** for faithful service is that they will obtain a **good standing**.
 - a) The key to this being they **didn't seek it**, but that by God's grace they will receive it.
2. This shows us that being a deacon is **not less important** than being a bishop.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 ¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ 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.

1. God wants us to know how to act and conduct ourselves when we come together for worship in the house of God.
 - a) We must remember that the church belongs to God.
2. And it is the church that is the pillar and ground of the truth.
 - a) **Psalm 119:160** The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.
 - b) **John 17:17** Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.
 - c) If the church is truth and the truth is His word then the church should be committed to the Word as one of its foundational priorities.
 - d) Spurgeon, “When the Church stands boldly out, and preaches the Word, it is the pillar of the truth.”
 - e) A pillar is a support structure, it holds something up.
 - i) The church is to hold up the truth in plain view for all to see.
 - ii) The church upholds the truth by believing it, obeying it, living it out, and proclaiming it.

1 Timothy 3:16 ¹⁶ 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.

1. An ancient hymn which affirms why the church’s work in making disciples of all nations is so necessary.
 - a) God was manifested in the flesh – This is the mystery revealed, God the Son came down out of heaven to save sinner.
 - b) Justified in the Spirit – The Holy Spirit confirmed what Jesus declared, that He was the Son of God who would be resurrected from the dead.
 - i) **1 Peter 3:18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,
 - c) Seen by angels – Notably, angels were present at His resurrection.
 - d) Preached among the Gentiles – This is the mission of the church, to make disciples of all nations.

- e) **Believed on in the world** – This is the **power of the gospel**, it's transforms the lives of those who believe.
- f) **Received up in glory** – This is Jesus' place presently, He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:56).
 - i) He is our **Living Hope**, who is preparing a place for us in heaven.

Conclusion: What's the big take away from this passage?

1. Do these qualifications present in your life?
2. As believers, we have all been **given gifts** to be used for **serving in the body** of Christ.
 - a) Each of you have the gifting and opportunity to serve as a deacon or deaconess, by serving others.
 - b) This is one of the principles ways we **love one another, by serving one another**.
 - c) Be deacons and deaconesses for the glory of God.

Invitation: Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Communion

ⁱ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2010/june/john-wooden-legend-passes-on.html>

ⁱⁱ All scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The New King James Version. (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

ⁱⁱⁱ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.