

## Qualifications for Deacons

The following qualifications are all of a subjective nature, and therefore must be understood as *comparatively* true for deacons, never as *absolutely* true. Also, we recognize that this is our particular interpretation (the author does not elaborate on the meaning), applicable to Xenos Christian Fellowship. The English is taken from the NASB. 1 Timothy 3:8-12

**Not double tongued** means not insincere--not saying one thing to one and something different to another. Not a liar. They are straightforward.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Cannot trust a leader who is prepared to lie.

The leader must be willing to speak the truth even if there is a potential “cost” (EG. Are they unwilling to confront if the person might become defensive?)

People will not have an example/source of inspiration for a courageous integrity.

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area?

Learn the principles that apply to the situation and choose to be principle-oriented.

Solicit input from others when dealing with difficult situations (Contra: autonomy, confusing “gossip versus conferral”, etc.).

Confess lies – go back and clean-up your mess...

**Not addicted to much wine** means no abuse or dependence on any drug--may include regular use of alcohol even though not getting drunk, if inappropriate dependence is demonstrated. There should be a demonstrated freedom not to drink.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Difficult to promote dependence on God when you're chemically dependent.

Irresponsible – difficulty in getting things done, especially when the work is difficult.

It is a bad witness to non-believers.

If this is a weakness what steps could be taken to make progress in this area?

Identify the times they get drunk – late at night, when depressed.

Calling when they are struggling (accountability and availability).

They need to learn to thank people who speak into their life.

They need to develop a godly response to trials.

They need to develop a sacrificial, victorious love output.

Limit their drinking to times with mature workers – tie to relationships (Qualification: if there is a dependence problem, professional counsel needs be solicited. Some addicts cannot even socially drink).

**Not fond of sordid gain.** Not willing to manipulate or resort to illegitimate means for personal gain, either for money or recognition (motives to serve), especially in the area of ministry. The person demonstrates a proper values system, including a willingness to give up money-making opportunities for the sake of the gospel.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Gross conformity to the culture.

Luke 16 principle – "...not faithful in the little things..." – "Why isn't our home church growing?" "Why am I ineffective in evangelism?" Might we look no further than here to discover why God hasn't entrusted more valuable things to us (like peoples' salvation)? Have we been consumed with the economic downturn? Is God showing us we are more focused on money than we should be?

God will challenge our motives for serving him. People who lead in order to be recognized by others are not ultimately serving the Lord and he will reveal this, unwillingness to continue to lead when critiqued about *how* you lead, resentment at being too busy, etc.

Idolatry will be bad for the church (James 4)

Being a good model doesn't ensure the flock will follow, but being a bad one ensures they will...

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

Hold off on handing over responsibility until they can demonstrate progress in this area.

This also implies that the deacon should be giving consistently and sacrificially of his/her money.

They need to invest in ministry. People will never get out of materialism, unless they get involved with ministry.

Financial counseling is often times appropriate.

**Holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.** "Holding fast" speaks of *knowing* the Word, and "clear conscience" speaks of *doing* the Word. This includes having a clear conscience with regard to the service being rendered to the church (i.e. sins of omission are also wrong).

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Ignorant activist - no spiritual gain without the word at the core.

Ivory tower theologian - knowledge without love

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

Study the Bible, take classes, commit to study with a friend, become a reader.

Get used to asking what does the Bible have to say about this.

Don't put the ivory tower teacher into the rotation until they have personal ministry.

**Tested first and beyond reproach.** Deacons must have a proven ability to do the work of shepherding and service effectively and without any grounds of accusation. In other words, we don't decide that someone is a deacon, we recognize that someone already is a deacon.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Leaders failing demoralizes the group and individual

Qualifier: don't use this as an excuse to avoid taking a step of faith

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

Learn Luke 14 – seek the lower seat and resist the urge for recognition

**Not malicious gossips.** They demonstrate care not to exaggerate or to abusively speak of others. This implies the ability to keep a secret where appropriate. If the failings of others are shared, it is only with those in a responsible position and for proper reasons.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Kills openness and trust within the community

Leaders have to be able to handle sensitive information in a righteous way.

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

They have to apologize

Challenge yourself on sharing information with people

Learn to forgive, resolve conflict and deal with bitterness

Work hard on speaking well of others, especially some one you compete with

**Temperate** comes from a word meaning serious, not given to excess, self-controlled and emotionally stable.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Leaders are under a lot of pressure, so you need a steady hand on the wheel.

Communicates a lack of trust in God

Miss more pressing issues – evangelism, discipleship

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

Seek objectivity and God's perspective

Identify and articulate areas where we are not depending on God.

**Faithful in all things** indicates reliability. It implies that we don't have to worry when this person is given a job to do--the deacon will do his/her best.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

They will tend to give up when the work gets hard

Flock will disperse – people are looking to us as an example

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

Learn to resist change when something becomes distasteful

**Husband of one wife.** Literally a "one-woman man," this means specifically that there is at most one person of the other sex in the deacon's life. It means in principle that the deacon has his/her sexuality resolved and under control.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

This includes flirting, porno habits, inappropriate "counseling" of the opposite sex, etc  
 If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

For singles – date only committed believers

This includes flirting, porno habits, inappropriate "counseling" of the opposite sex, etc

**One who manages his own household well.** The primary application is to married men meaning that their family life is good. In the case of the unmarried, it means that they have close relationships and that those relationships are generally healthy and stable. A pattern of broken relationships suggests an inability to get along with others (especially your own family and friends) and disqualifies a would-be deacon.

Why is this important? How would it hurt your home group to have a leader who is disqualified in this area?

Failure at home will sap your strength for ministry like no other failure can

Inability to lead well at home reveals a character weakness that will show up in the church as well.

Can be a negative witness to non-believers

If this is a weakness in your life what steps could you take to make progress in this area.

Ask for help, input from mature believers

Invest in your family -

## Character Qualifications for Elders

### Above reproach

(1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6,7)--*anepilempton*: unaccusable; *anegkleton*: unreprouvable

This is the summation of all other characteristics.

Not only the absence of disqualifying factors is in view, but positive things are evident

A good reputation spiritually (Acts 6:3; 16:2).

### Husband of one wife

(1 Timothy 3:2)--*mais gunaikos andros*: "one-woman man"

This probably does not refer to polygamy (which was not common in the Roman empire), but rather that sexual morality is an established life-style.

This qualification does not exclude divorcees; present life-style only is in view (as with all of the qualifications).

This includes flirting, porno habits, inappropriate "counseling" of the opposite sex, etc.

### Temperate

(1 Tim. 3:2)--*nephalion*: sober

This is the opposite of being mentally and spiritually dense. It is linked with alertness in 1 Thess. 5:6 and 1 Pet. 5:8.

The person has a clear perspective on life, and a correct spiritual orientation.

### Prudent

(1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)--*sophrona*: thoughtful, self-controlled, sane

The person is mentally healthy (Mk. 5:15; 2 Cor 5:13).

He has an honest evaluation of himself which involves neither arrogance nor self-hate (Rom. 12:3).

The person evidences the ability to be reasonable, sensible, able to keep one's head (Titus 2:6; 1 Pet. 4:7).

### **Respectable**

(1 Tim. 3:2)--*kosmion*: well-ordered

A habit of orderliness and stability has been established (see 1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:4).

### **Hospitable**

(1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)--*philoxenon*: "lover of strangers"

The person takes a genuine interest in new people. This would include both an outreach orientation and the willingness to open his home to others (Heb. 13:2).

### **Able to Teach**

(1 Tim. 3:2)--*didaktikon*: skilled at teaching

The elder must understand Scripture well enough to be able to effectively exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9).

This does not necessitate being a gifted large-group teacher.

"Grounded in the Word" means that the elder can explain and apply biblical concepts in your his words, and discern error when he hears it.

### **Not Addicted to Wine**

(1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)--*me paroinon*: "not lingering over wine"

The person has a demonstrated freedom from drunkenness, or substance abuse. There is no dependence on alcohol or other drugs.

Able to give up freedom to avoid stumbling a weaker brother (1 Cor. 8)

### **Not self-willed**

(Titus 1:7)--*me authade*: not a usurper

This is linked with rebelliousness in 2 Pet. 2:10, and with usurpation of rightful authority in 1 Tim. 2:12.

There should be a proven ability to defer to others.

Avoids a "my way or the highway;" attitude.

To "defer" means that you actively get behind the others' way and help it to succeed.

Implies he is able to apologize

### **Not quick-tempered**

(Titus 1:7)--*me orgilon*: not inclined to anger

The person is not vengeful or violent, brooding or bitter (see Eph. 4:29,31), especially when he doesn't get his own way.

When Moses struck the rock (Num. 20) he was refused entry into Canaan. When leaders misrepresent God by making him seem more angry than he really is, it's a serious thing (Jas. 1:19,20)

Leaders may get angry, but they should be slow to anger rather than having a short fuse.

The leader must be under control, avoiding violent outbursts

Elders must be able to drop offenses, not hold onto them

### **Not pugnacious**

(Titus 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:3)--*me plekten*: not a striker

The person is not prone to physical or verbal abuse (i.e. slander, put-downs, etc.)

Not a fighter

### **Gentle**

(1 Tim. 3:3)--*epieike*: gracious, forbearing

The person is not unduly rigorous or legalistic in his treatment of people.

He is kind, empathetic and patient with all people.

The opposite of quick-tempered, or pugnacious.

People are fragile. We need to consider how our words and actions will affect them. See 2 Tim. 2:24,25; 1 Thess. 2:7; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:3; Col. 3:12,13; 1 Tim. 6:11; Gal. 5:22,23; Jas. 3:17.

### **Uncontentious**

(1 Tim. 3:3)--*amachon*: peaceable

This means not looking for ways to disagree or oppose; not loving to fight or quarrel.

The person possesses a positive and constructive point of view.

This is the opposite of being self-willed.

### **Free From the Love of Money**

(1 Tim. 3:3)--*philagruron*: not greedy

This means the ability to be content with what one has materially (1 Tim. 6:8).

The person is not motivated by financial considerations in ministry goals (see Acts 20:33)

True love for Christ and his work will become eclipsed by greed (see Mat. 6:24). Our day is replete with newsy examples of the error of money-love in the church.

See 1 Tim. 6:6-11,17-19. Mature elders should give away much to others, and should live a simple life-style in order to curb temptation.

### **Manages own household well**

(1 Tim. 3:4,5; Titus 1:6)--*prohistemenon*: to stand before; manage; to lead, used of an army commander standing before his men

This is a demonstrated ability to lead spiritually and effectively in marriage and/or a rooming situation

The elder's family should respect him and voluntarily follow his leadership

Examining one's family life tends to ensure that the person is spiritually authentic and not two-faced.

Christian leader's first responsibility is to their own family. Prioritizing and practicing biblical principles with family and home is crucial in cooperating with God

### **Not a new convert**

(1 Tim. 3:6)--*me neophuton*: "newly planted"

The person has been a walking Christian long enough to be tested by God (see 1 Tim. 3:10)

The person should have experienced success without becoming conceited

### **Having a good reputation with those outside**

(1 Tim. 3:7)--*exotheren*: used by Paul for non-Christians (Col. 4:5)

Non-Christians are unable to discredit the person.

They speak well of him generally, and accusations are easily exposed as false (1 Pet. 3:16).

The person is spiritually authentic and not two-faced. This is has important, obvious implications for evangelism.

The elder resists a Christian ghetto mentality, and fosters a constant awareness of the watching world

### **Loving what is good**

(Titus 1:8)--*philagathon*:= loving good

The person's lifestyle demonstrates that God's way is enjoyed (see Rom. 12:2)

There is no questionable dichotomy between the person's recreational life and ministry

### **Just**

(Titus 1:8)--*dikiaon*:

The person is fair and impartial in his dealings with people (1 Tim. 5:21).

When favoritism and particular biases are adopted, the biblical concepts of righteousness and goodness fade, and with that, God's agenda and priorities.

To gain victory in this area, one must be well aware of what his own bias tendencies are, and must resist those in favor of biblical truth

### **Devout**

(Titus 1:8)--*hosion*: Practical seriousness and zeal for God's will

A single-mindedness for God and His work.