

Church Officer Qualifications - Deaconesses

“Deaconess” is simply the feminine form of “deacon,” which literally means “table waiter.” Deacons are servants of the church. The Apostles charged certain men to help serve with the temporal affairs of the church (Acts 6:1-6). In practical terms Deacons assist the Elders as directed, and they have to meet certain spiritual qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13). In the same way, Deaconesses are godly women who are servants of the church who assist the Elders as directed, and they must meet certain qualifications. General Qualifications of a godly woman are seen in demonstrating the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22,23 and in passages such as 1 Timothy 2:9-15; Titus 2:3-5 and 1 Peter 3:1-6. Specific qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:11

Galatians 5:22 (NASB) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

1 Timothy 2:9 (NASB) *Likewise, [I want] women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; 10 but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. 11 Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. 13 For it was Adam who was first created, [and] then Eve. 14 And [it was] not Adam [who] was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. 15 But [women] shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.*

Titus 2:3 (NASB) *Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 [to be] sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.*

1 Peter 3:1 (NASB) *In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any [of them] are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 And let not your adornment be [merely] external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. 6 Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.*

1 Timothy 3:11 *"Women* must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things."*

(*We hold the context here to show that “women” in this passage refers to women deacons/servants and not restricted to the wife of a deacon).

Deaconesses are to be:

1. DIGNIFIED: A deaconess is to be a grave, serious minded, steady, solid individual. She behaves in an honorable manner.
2. NOT MALICIOUS GOSSIPS: A deaconess controls her tongue and does not slander or accuse other people. The greek word here for “malicious gossip” is used as a name for the devil in many passages of the New Testament because he slanders and accuses the saints.
3. TEMPERATE: A deaconess is sober in judgement. She is self-controlled, stable and steady in her thinking. She is not given to anger, or outbursts nor is she “flighty,” “scatter-brained,” or addicted to anything that would make her so. (The meaning of the root word is to “not be addicted to wine.”)
4. FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS: A deaconess is trustworthy in all things. She is faithful to accomplish any task given to her, and she is faithful in her commitment and walk with the Lord.

The only deaconess mentioned in the New Testament is Phoebe in Romans 16:1 who was recognized for her service to the church in Cenchrea.