

# DEACONS/DEACONESS

1. **DEACON** is the Greek word **DIAKONOS**: “Primarily denotes a servant, whether as doing servile work or as an attendant rendering free service, without particular reference to its character. The word is probably connected with the verb *diako*, to hasten after, pursue (perhaps originally said of a runner).

A. It occurs in the New Testament of domestic servants, ***John 2:5,9***;

B. The civil ruler, ***Romans 13:4***;

C. Christ, ***Romans 15:8, Galatians 2:17***;

D. the followers of Christ in relation to their Lord, ***John 12:26, Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 1:7; 4:7***;

E. the followers of Christ in relation to one another, ***Matthew 20:26, 23:11, Mark 9:35; 10:43***;

F. the servants of Christ in the work of preaching and teaching, ***I Corinthians 3:5, II Corinthians 3:6; 6:4; 11:23, Ephesians 3:7, Colossians 1:23,25, I Thessalonians 3:2, I Timothy 4:6***;

G. those who serve in the churches, ***Romans 16:1*** (used of a woman here only in the New Testament); ***Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:8,12***;

H. False apostles, servants of Satan, ***I Corinthians 11:15***.

I. **Diakonos** is, generally speaking, to be distinguished from **Doulos**, a bondservant or slave; **Diakonos** views a servant in relationship to his work; **Doulos** views him in relationship to his master. Example: **Matthew 22:2-14** (those who bring in the guests in verses 3,4,6,8,10 are *douloi*; those who carry out the king’s sentence in verse 13 are *diakonoi*).”

2. **The office of Deacon (diakonos) is a necessary one.**

**A. *Philippians 1:1***: “*Paul and Timothy, bond servants (doulos) of Christ Jesus...to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the Overseers and Deacons (diakonos).*”

1. **This shows three different groups of people who make up a Church: *Saints* (Christians), *Overseers* (Elders), and *Deacons* (servants in relationship to their work in the Church).**

2. This also shows that there is a difference between being a servant or slave to Jesus, and a servant of a specific work in a Church.

**3. DUTIES** are described by the meaning of the word used: **Diakonos** means one who serves in relationship to his work. In the case of the Church, **Acts 6:1-5** serves as the best example.

**A.** The 12 Apostles (acting Overseers of the first Church), asked the members of that Church in Jerusalem to select 7 men to serve the Church in a specific service (*diakonos*) or job: to take care of the Grecians Jewish widows who were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

1. Most believe (because of their area of service to the Church, that these were the first Deacons of a Church (as the Apostle Paul gave qualifications in ***I Timothy 3:8,12***).

**B.** It is interesting to note that the word **diakonos** (*servant or deacon*) occurs only three times in this passage:

1. **Verse 1:** “...their widows were being overlooked in the daily **distribution** (*diakonos*) of food...”

2. **Verse 2:** “...it would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to **wait** (*diakonos*) on tables.”

3. **Verse 4:** “...and we (Apostles) will give our attention to prayer and the **ministry** (*diakonos*) of the Word.”

#### **4. What about DEACONESS?**

**A. Romans 16:1,2:** “I commend to you our **sister Phoebe, a servant** (*diakonon*) of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me (Paul).”

1. **There is not a Greek word in the New Testament for “deaconess” (feminine).** The word mistranslated here in **verse 1** used to describe Phoebe, is the exact word used to describe Jesus in **Romans 15:8:** “**diakonon**” (which is obviously not the feminine usage of the word, but neuter). In other words, as Jesus was *a servant* (*diakonon*), so was Phoebe a servant in relationship to her work at the church in Cenchreae, and the Apostle Paul.

2. The New Testament does use the masculine and feminine usages of the word for “**elder**” or “**presbuteros**” which means aged man or woman (***Titus 2:2,3 and I Timothy 5:1,2***); but, when the Bible speaks of the office of *Elder or Deacon*,

only the masculine usage of the word *Elder* (***I Timothy 3:2***) and *Deacon* (***I Timothy 3:8***).

3. It must be made clear that being called a *diakonos* (deacon, minister or servant) does not automatically mean the office of Deacon as in ***I Timothy 3:8-13***:

a. All Christians are told to be *diakonos servants* in ***Mark 10:43, and II Corinthians 3:6 and 6:4***.

b. Our rulers are called *diakonos servants* in ***Romans 13:4***.

c. Christ is called a *diakonos servant* in ***Romans 15:8***.

d. Apollos and Paul were called *diakonos servants* in ***I Corinthians 3:5***.

e. Demons were called *diakonos servants* in ***II Corinthians 11:15***.

4. The word “**deaconess**” was first used in the Protestant churches in Germany in 1883.

**B. *I Timothy 3:11***: “*In the same way, their wives (gune) are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*”

1. **Gune** is the Greek word translated: “*denotes a woman, married or unmarried; a wife (Matthew 1:20, I Corinthians 7:3,4)*”

2. In ***I Timothy 3:11***, the word “**wives**” (**gune**) is in reference to the wives of the male Deacons mentioned in **verses 7,8** before the word “wives;” and **verse 12** after the word (all of which are in the masculine form).

**C. If *Romans 16:1 and I Timothy 3:11*** do refer to women Deacons as an office of the Church (and we are sure the women served the churches); their office would be a restrictive office of Deacon differing from the male Deacons.

1. The Apostle Paul (who wrote all these controversial Scriptures concerning deacons) wrote in ***I Corinthians 14:34-38***: “*As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain **silent** in the churches. They are not allowed to **speak**, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to **speak** in the church. Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, **let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.***”

a. Women not allowed to speak is in reference to ***14:26-33***, which is talking of prophesying or preaching and teaching (either in tongues or by Divine Revelation).

b. The word for “**silent**” is not *phimoo* which means “*to muzzle*” or

“speechless,” but it is *sige* which refers to “quietness” as in Paul’s explanation of this command in *I Timothy 2:11,12*.

c. *Verse 35* uses the Greek word “*laleo*” for “speak,” which refers to *verses 2,3-6,9,11,13,18,19,21,23,27-29,30*. All of these are in regards to speaking as an authority figure in a worship service with men. It is the only time this word is used in the New Testament.

d. There are 13 words for “speak” mentioned in the New Testament and one of those words is *phthengomai* which means “to utter a sound” — **Paul never uses that word when talking about women in the church.**

e. In *verse 34*, remaining “silent” and not speaking is in reference to *prophesying, preaching, teaching, and speaking in tongues*.

f. But the next *verse 35*, starts with: “if they want to **inquire** about something they are to ask their own husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to **speak** in the church.” The word for “speak” in here in *verse 35* is in reference to **inquiring** about something (not preaching or teaching — which would be telling something).

2. The Apostle Paul (*just before he gave the qualifications for Elders and Deacons*) clarifies what he meant in *I Corinthians 14:34-38*, when he wrote *I Timothy 2:11,12*: “A woman should learn in **quietness** and full submission. **I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.**”

a. Both the word “*silent*” and the word “*quietness*” is the same Greek word “*hesuchios*,” which is translated: “quiet, tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others, peaceable, associated with ‘meek,’ and is to characterize the spirit or disposition.”

b. The word “*teach*” is the Greek word “*didasko*,” which is translated: “...used absolutely to give instructions.”

c. “to have authority over” is one Greek word — “*authenteo*,” which is translated: “...to exercise authority on one’s own account, to domineer over, to usurp authority, to have dominion.”

**D.** It must be concluded that the word “**Deaconess**” is not found in the New Testament; and that even though the women are considered equal to the men (*Galatians 3:27,28*), and equally gifted with the men by the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:14-16; 2:1-4,14-18; I Corinthians 14; Acts 10:24,44-46*), they were limited to how they could use their gifts **in the Church** regarding authoritative speaking, teaching or exercising authority **over the men** (nothing said about the children or women).

**1. Why? *I Corinthians 11:3*:** “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman if man...”

**2. *I Timothy 2:13*:** “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”

**3. But, they could use their gifts (even with a man) outside the Church,** according to *Acts 18:24-26*: “...Apollos...came to Ephesus. He was a learned man with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, knowing only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When **Priscilla** and Aquila heard him, **they invited him to their home and explained** to him the way of God more adequately.

a. The word “**explained**” is the Greek word “**ektithemi**” which is translated: “to set out, expose; expound; witness.” (This is **not** the word “**didasko**” or “**teach**” that Paul used in *I Timothy 2:11,12*).

**4. Furthermore, the older women should be teaching the younger women** according to the Apostle Paul in *Titus 2:3,4*.

**5. Remember, Paul is not putting women down or belittling them in the Church as a lower class Christian than men.** He is just teaching the order of a man and woman’s role in the Church as commanded by God!

**A. When it came time to list the most important people in the Apostle Paul’s ministry, the first two are women! *Romans 16:1-3*:** “I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a servant of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. Greet **Priscilla** and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house.”

**B. Also remember that it was the Apostle Paul who wrote *Galatians 3:26-28*:** “**You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**”