

Qualifications of Deacons

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1 Timothy 3:11 ... 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. (KJV)

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

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

Even so must their wives (KJV); Likewise, their wives (NKJV); Women must likewise (NASB)

The Greek word *gunē*, here translated “wives” (KJV & NKJV) or “women” (NASB), occurs over 200x in the NT. Thomas says it refers to “a woman” [1135]. BDAG offers the following meanings: “(1) an adult female person, woman (virgins are included); (2) a married woman, wife; (3) a newly married woman, bride, to be considered in some contexts.”

Modern English translations differ: The KJV, NKJV, NIV and ESV read “their wives...” while the ASV, NASB, RSV, and NRSV render it “women...” The NASB Marginal Note says, “i.e. either deacons’ wives or deaconesses.” Recognizing that context determines meaning, we understand the language of 1st Timothy 3:11 describes the wives of elders and deacons.

*Even so must **their wives** be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. (KJV)*

*Likewise, **their wives** must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. (NKJV)*

*In the same way, **their wives** are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. (NIV)*

***Their wives** likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. (ESV)*

***Women** in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. (ASV)*

***Women** must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. (NASB)*

The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. (RSV)

Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. (NRSV)

Be grave (KJV); Be reverent (NKJV); Be dignified (NASB)

The Greek word *semnos*, here translated “grave” (KJV), “reverent” (NKJV), or “dignified” (NASB), occurs 4x in the NT (Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2). As noted earlier, BDAG say it pertains to “to evoking special respect; (1) of living entities; (a) human beings worthy of respect/honor, noble, dignified, serious; (b) transcendent beings worthy of reverence, august, sublime, holy (extra-Biblical examples); (2) of characteristics, states of being, and things honorable, worthy, venerable, holy, above reproach.”

*Philippians 4:8 ... 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is ***honorable**, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. (NASB)*

*1 Timothy 3:8 ... 8 Deacons likewise must be ***men of *dignity**, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, (NASB)*

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

*Titus 2:2 ... 2 Older men are to be temperate, ***dignified**, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. (NASB)*

A related word, *semnotēs*, occurs 3x in the NT (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:4; Titus 2:7). Thomas says it describes “seriousness” [4587]. BDAG defines it as “a manner or mode of behavior that indicates one is above what is ordinary and therefore worthy of special respect; (a) of a human being dignity, seriousness, probity, holiness=Lat. Gravitas; (b) of a deity holiness.”

*1 Timothy 2:2 ... 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and ***dignity**. (NASB)*

*1 Timothy 3:4 ... 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all ***dignity** (NASB)*

*Titus 2:7 ... 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, ***dignified**, (NASB)*

Accordingly, this quality is required of disciples in general (1 Tim. 2:2 Phil. 4:8), elders/overseers (1 Tim. 3:4), deacons (1 Tim. 3:8), their wives (1 Tim. 3:11), older men (Titus 2:2), and evangelists (Titus 2:7).

*1 Timothy 2:1-2 ... 1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and *dignity. (NASB)*

*Philippians 4:8 ... 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is *honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. (NASB)*

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*Titus 2:2 ... 2 Older men are to be temperate, *dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. (NASB)*

*Titus 2:7-8 ... 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, *dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. (NASB)*

Not slanderers (KJV & NKJV); Not malicious gossips (NASB)

The Greek word *diabolos*, here translated “slanderers” (KJV & NKJV) or “malicious gossips” (NASB), frequently refers to the devil himself. Thomas defines it as “slandorous, accusing falsely” [1228]. BDAG say it “(1) pertains to engagement in slander, slanderous; (2) substantively, one who engages in slander.” Frequently it refers to Satan (1 Tim. 3:6, 7; 2 Tim. 2:26); occasionally it is used of men and women (1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3).

*1 Timothy 3:6 ... 6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the *devil. (NASB)*

*1 Timothy 3:7 ... 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the *devil. (NASB)*

*2 Timothy 2:26 ... 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the *devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (NASB)*

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

*2 Timothy 3:3 ... 3 unloving, irreconcilable, *malicious *gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, (NASB)*

*Titus 2:3 ... 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not ***malicious** ***gossips** nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, (NASB)*

Many passages warn against the sin of gossip and slander (Prov. 10:18; 16:28; 20:19; Rom. 1:28-31; 2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31-32; 1 Tim. 5:13; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 2:3-5).

*Proverbs 10:18 ... 18 He who conceals hatred has lying lips, And he who spreads **slander** is a fool. (NASB)*

*Proverbs 16:28 ... 28 A perverse man spreads strife, And a **slanderer** separates intimate friends. (NASB)*

*Proverbs 20:19 ... 19 He who goes about as a **slanderer** reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a **gossip**. (NASB)*

*Romans 1:28-31 ... 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are **gossips**, 30 **slanderers**, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; (NASB)*

*2 Corinthians 12:20-21 ... 20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, **slanders**, **gossip**, arrogance, disturbances; 21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced. (NASB)*

*Ephesians 4:31-32 ... 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and **slander** be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (NASB)*

*1 Timothy 5:13 ... 13 At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also **gossips** and **busybodies**, talking about things not proper to mention. (NASB)*

*2 Timothy 3:1-5 ... 1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, **malicious gossips**, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. (NASB)*

*Titus 2:3-5 ... 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not **malicious gossips** nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so 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, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (NASB)

Sober (KJV); Temperate (NKJV & NASB)

The Greek word *nēphalios*, translated “sober” (KJV) or “temperate” (NKJV & NASB), occurs 3x in the NT (1 Tim. 3:2, 11; Titus 2:2). Thomas defines it as “sober” [3524]. BDAG say it “(1) pertains to being very moderate in the drinking of an alcoholic beverage, temperate, sober. For prohibition of strong drink to priests when engaging in official duties see Leviticus 10:8-11; (2) pertains to being restrained in conduct, self-controlled, level-headed figurative extension of 1.”

According to Moulton & Milligan, an ancient extra-Biblical text uses this word, whose meaning “may refer either to altars at which only wineless offerings were made, or perhaps to cakes made in the form of an altar, free from all infusion of wine” [G3524].

*1 Timothy 3:2 ... 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, ***temperate**, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, (NASB)*

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

*Titus 2:2 ... 2 Older men are to be ***temperate**, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. (NASB)*

Leviticus 10:8-11 ... 8 The Lord then spoke to Aaron, saying, 9 “Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die—it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations— 10 and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, 11 and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them through Moses.” (NASB)

A related word, *nēphō*, occurs 6x in the NT (1 Thess. 5:6, 8; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8), and means “to be sober” or “to abstain from wine” [Thomas 3525].

*1 Thessalonians 5:6 ... 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and ***sober**. (NASB)*

*1 Thessalonians 5:8 ... 8 But since we are of the day, let us be ***sober**, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. (NASB)*

*2 Timothy 4:5 ... 5 But you, be ***sober** in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (NASB)*

*1 Peter 1:13 ... 13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, ***keep *sober** in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (NASB)*

*1 Peter 4:7 ... 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and ***sober** spirit for the purpose of prayer. (NASB)*

*1 Peter 5:8 ... 8 Be of ***sober** spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (NASB)*

Faithful in all things (KJV, NKJV & NASB)

The Greek word *pistos*, occurring 67x in the NT, refers to one who is “faithful, reliable” [Thomas 4103]. BDAG define this adjective as “(1) pertaining to being worthy of belief or trust, trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust/faith, pass. aspect of *pisteuō*; (a) of persons; of human beings (and Christ); of God as the One in whom we can have full confidence; (b) of things, esp. of words; (2) pertaining to being trusting, trusting, cherishing faith/trust act. aspect of *pisteuō*.”

Faithfulness is required of disciples in general (Luke 12:42-44; 16:10-13), and teachers in particular (1 Tim. 1:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:1-4). It is reflected in the lives of Christian women, such as Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) and the wives of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:11).

*Luke 12:42-44 ... 42 And the Lord said, “Who then is the ***faithful** and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 44 “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. (NASB)*

*Luke 16:10-13 ... 10 “He who is ***faithful** in a very little thing is ***faithful** also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. 11 “Therefore if you have not been ***faithful** in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? 12 “And if you have not been ***faithful** in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? 13 “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” (NASB)*

*1 Timothy 1:12-13 ... 12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me ***faithful**, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; (NASB)*

*2 Timothy 2:1-4 ... 1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to ***faithful** men who will be able to teach others also. 3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (NASB)*

Acts 16:14-15 ... 14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she

*urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be ***faithful** to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us. (NASB)*

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