



## MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of July 19th-25th

### Getting Started

1. Have you ever found yourself in an environment when you knew that (for whatever reason) you were completely out of your depth? If so, share about it with the group. On the other hand, what about a time in your life when you sensed that you were the right person in the right place for the right reason? Please share that with your group as well.

### Digging Deeper

2. When it comes to serving in the context of our local church's mission to be and make disciples of Jesus, three C's are critical: biblical *convictions*, Christ-like *character*, and ministry *competence*. Why is it not enough to settle and say 'two outta three ain't bad'? What do convictions and character look like without *competence*? Or convictions and competence without *character*? Or character and competence without *convictions*? Discuss what's lost in each case, and what's gained when all three are present in a person's life as we serve.

### Open Your Bible to 1 Timothy 3:8-13...

3. As you work your way through the biblical character qualities for deacons (vv.8-13), one thing you may notice are some key variations with those required of elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Noticeably different is the expectation of an elder to "teach" the faith (1 Timothy 3:2), as opposed to the expectation of a deacon to "hold" to the faith (1 Timothy 3:9). Compare this as well with what Paul tells Titus about elders in Titus 1:9. What's similar between these two offices in the church? On the other hand, what's the difference? Why does it matter?
4. Though the New Testament is nearly silent about the specific types of deed ministry to which deacons are called (though Acts 6:1-7 provides one example), it might be possible to reconstruct a deacon's job description on the basis of the character required for this office. Consider the character qualities below and attempt to work backward to a possible job description for deacons in the local church:
  - "dignified" (v.8)
  - "not double-tongued" (v.8)
  - "not addicted to much wine" (v.8)
  - "not greedy for dishonest gain" (v.8)
  - "hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" (v.9)
  - "tested"; "worthy" (v.10)
  - "good repute" (Acts 6:3)
  - "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:3)
  - "full of...wisdom" (Acts 6:3)
  - "full of faith" (Acts 6:5)

5. 1 Timothy 3:11 is at the heart of some disagreement among Bible believing Christians. In verse 11, Paul uses the Greek word “*gunikas*” which can be translated “women” or “wives” depending upon the context. The question here has to do with whether or not Scripture considers women as deacons, assistants to deacons, or the wives of deacons. Though it may be warranted for smoothing out Paul’s meaning, it’s important to know that the word “their” is not in the original. So, what is the identity of the “*gunikas*” in v.11? See if you can come to a consensus as a group. Are they:
1. Deacons in their own right
  2. Women who assist the deacons
  3. The wives of deacons Why do you think so? Do you very best to make your case using the words of Scripture, considering the immediate flow of thought in vv.8-13 as well as the broader context of 1 Timothy 2:8-3:13.
6. In Romans 16:1, Paul draws our attention to a woman named Phoebe who was a “servant” (lit. in the Greek, a deacon) of the church in Cenchreae. Do you think he’s referring to her in the more common, non-technical sense of “servant” or “minister” as he does in other contexts (see 1 Timothy 4:6; Ephesians 6:21)? Or do you believe he’s making a statement about her role as an office-holder (i.e. a deacon in the technical sense - as in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8, 10, 13)? Why? What leads you to your conclusion?
7. In verse 13, Paul lists two motives for the work of deacons. What are they? How do these serve as encouragements to those who are (or who aspire to be) deacons?