

The Doctrine of the Church *Church Leadership (Part 2a)*

a) **Biblical Offices of Leadership within the Church**

ii) Deacons

a) The Identity of Deacons

(1) “Servant” or *diakonos*¹

- (a) Used to refer to general service or ministry (Acts 1:17, 25; 19:22; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:5; 16:15; Eph 4:12; Col 4:17; 2 Tim 1:18; Phlm 13; Heb 6:10; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Rev 2:19)

- (b) Used to refer to governmental ruler as “God’s servant” (Rom 13:4)

- (c) Used to refer to caring for physical needs (Matt 25:44; Acts 11:29; 12:25; Rom 15:25, 31; 2 Cor 8:4, 19-20; 11:8).

- (d) Used to refer to waiting on tables (Matt 22:13; Luke 10:40; 17:8; John 2:5, 9; 12:2).

- (e) Used to refer to the ministry of Jesus and His followers (Matt 20:26-28; 23:11; John 12:26; Luke 12:37; Rom 15:8).

- (f) Used to refer to the ministry of NT apostles and ministers as well as OT prophets (Acts 20:24; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:3, 6-9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3-4; 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23; 1 Tim 1:12; 4:6; 2 Tim 4:5, 11; 1 Pet 1:12)

- (g) Used to refer to the ministry of angels (Matt 4:11; Heb 1:14).

¹ The following categories and Scripture references are adapted from Mark Dever’s “The Church: The Gospel Made Visible” (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 51-52.

(2) The Office of Deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13; also see Philippians 1:1)

(a) The Question of 1 Timothy 3:11 – deacons’ wives or women deacons²

(i) “*Gunaiikas*” in 3:11 can either mean “wives” or “women” – either deacons’ wives or women deacons

(ii) Support for “women (deacons) likewise”

(a) Evidence from the context of 1 Timothy 3

(i) Absence of the pronoun in 3:11

(ii) Inclusion of “likewise”

(iii) Absence of qualification for wives of elders

(b) Evidence from Romans 16:1

(c) Evidence from Church history

(i) From Tom Schreiner: *“My argument from church history is not determinative, since it isn’t from Scripture. Nevertheless, we see an early example of women serving as deacons in the correspondence between Pliny the younger and the emperor Trajan (AD 98–117). In a fascinating conversation, Pliny asks Trajan for advice about what he should do as the legate to the province in Bithynia with Christians. We want to think about one small piece of the conversation. Pliny refers to two Christian women, who were called ministrae in Latin. In English we can translate this word as “ministers,” and that is a good translation into Latin of the Greek word diakonos, which means “servant” or “minister.” We thus have an early example—in the second decade of the second century—of women serving as deacons. Obviously, such an example doesn’t prove women should serve as deacons, but it suggests women functioned as deacons in the early church.”*

(d) No conflict with the prohibitions to teaching and authority in 1 Timothy 2:12

² For a more detailed discussion, see Tom Schreiner’s article at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bible-support-female-deacons-yes/>