

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

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1 TIMOTHY: DUTIES AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH, [1 Timothy 2:1-3:13](#) The Deacons of the Church, [1 Timothy 3:8-13](#)

[\(1 Timothy 3:8-13\)](#) **Introduction:** this passage discusses the second officer of the church, the deacon. The office of deacon is so important that the qualifications required are just as high as those demanded of a minister or bishop. In this day and time, when worldliness, immorality, and lawlessness are running so rampant, the qualifications for deacons need to be studied, heeded, and guarded ever so diligently.

Prayer

[Acts 6:1-4](#) can be called a success story because the apostles demonstrated that they had learned their lessons from Jesus. What enabled them to so confidently state their priorities? They had been with Jesus. They had seen Him live and minister as a man of prayer and the Word ([Mark 1:35-39](#)). Like their Master, they were men of prayer. Prayer had become a major part of their work. They were not building ships for the fishing industry in Galilee; they were building people for God. They were involved in spiritual conflict over the souls of men and women. Therefore, prayer was one of their foremost duties.

The shepherds of God's precious flock must understand that *prayer is the shepherds' work*, and that it requires time and energy. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, once cautioned, "Do not be so busy with the work of Christ (or anything else) that you have no strength left for praying. True prayer requires strength." William Carey, father of modern missions and missionary to India, has been quoted as saying, "Prayer is my real business! Cobbling shoes is a sideline; it just helps me pay expenses." Prayer is clearly the shepherds' real business. Shepherds would do well to keep the words of James before them in all their pastoral labors: "**The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much**" ([James 5:16](#)).

Much more should be said about the indispensable role that prayer plays in the shepherds' ministry, but space does not permit. So I will conclude with a stirring challenge and sound counsel from Paul E. Billheimer's inspiring book, *Destined for the Throne*:

A church without an intelligent, well-organized, and systematic prayer program is simply operating a religious treadmill.... Any church program, no matter how impressive, if it is not supported by an adequate prayer program, is little more than an ecclesiastical treadmill. It is doing little or no damage to Satan's kingdom....

Does anyone imagine that souls are delivered from Satan's bondage by means of human talent, the hypnotic power of human personality, the charm of human magnetism, eloquence, articulateness, or the magic of Madison Avenue techniques? All of these gifts God may use, but alone they are utterly powerless to deliver even one soul from the captivity of sin.

The Word

Alongside the shepherds' priority of prayer is the ministry of the Word—evangelism and teaching of believers. Prayer and the Word must always go together. Our Lord was a mighty man of prayer and the Word. E. M. Bounds, author of many books on prayer, warns of the spiritual weakness of prayerless preachers: "The pulpit of this day is weak in praying. The pride of learning is against the dependent humility of prayer.... Every preacher who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and ministry is weak as a factor in God's work."

Throughout the New Testament, we witness the priority that Christ and His followers place on proclaiming and teaching the Word of God. In [Mark 3:14](#), we read, "And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach." From the start of Christianity, on the day of Pentecost, we read about the principal role of teaching and proclaiming the Word. Peter preached the Word and three thousand people were converted. To a room full of eager listeners, Peter said that Christ had commanded him and his fellow apostles to preach the Word: "**And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One ...**" ([Acts 10:42](#)). If the apostles spent too much time caring for the welfare of widows, their primary mission of spreading the Word to unbelievers and teaching the church would have been seriously hindered. The Word of God had to go forth.

Preaching the Word is no less important to church shepherds today. Note how the late D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, of Westminster Chapel in London, summarizes this passage:

Now there the priorities are laid down once and for ever. This is the primary task of the Church, the primary task of the leaders of the Church, the people who are set in this position of authority; and we must not allow anything to deflect us from this, however good the cause, however great the need.

Lloyd-Jones emphasizes that powerful teaching of the Word of God has ignited all the great revivals of Christianity. Likewise, all the decadent eras of Christianity resulted from the loss of Scripture's centrality in the work of God. He writes:

Is it not clear, as you take a bird's-eye view of Church history, that the decadent periods and eras in the history of the Church have always been those periods when preaching had declined? What is it that always heralds the dawn of a Reformation or of a Revival? It is renewed preaching.... A revival of true preaching has always heralded these great movements in the history of the Church.