

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13 (17)

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.

J. I. Packer, widely known author and professor at Regent College in Canada, also believes that church renewal will be futile if it is not founded on biblical preaching: “I constantly maintain that if today’s quest for renewal is not, along with its other concerns, a quest for true preaching, it will prove shallow and barren.”

The major distinguishing characteristic of the New Testament church is the centrality of proclaiming and teaching the Word of God. So when shepherds neglect the Word of God, they sabotage the work of God. Therefore, the lessons of [Acts 6:1-4](#) must be repeatedly rehearsed, as John R. W. Stott, former Rector of All Souls’ Church in London and an honorary chaplain to the queen of England, so aptly states:

The Church of every generation has to re-learn the lesson of [Acts 6](#). There was nothing wrong with the apostles’ zeal for God and his Church. They were busily engaged in a Christ-like, compassionate ministry to needy widows. But it was not the ministry to which they, as apostles, had been called. Their vocation was “the ministry of the Word and prayer”; the social care of the widows was the responsibility of others.

Stott goes on to encourage preachers by saying,

If today’s pastors were to take seriously the New Testament emphasis on the priority of preaching and teaching, not only would they find it extremely fulfilling themselves, but also it would undoubtedly have a very wholesome effect on the Church. Instead, tragic to relate, many are essentially administrators, whose symbols of ministry are the office rather than the study, and the telephone rather than the Bible.

The apostles had their priorities straight and were determined to keep them straight. The church prospered spiritually and numerically because of their unwavering commitment.

Let us heed the words of that godly judge of Israel, Samuel, that they might be burned permanently into our hearts and minds in order to guide our spiritual priorities:

“... far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way” ([1 Samuel 12:23](#)).

Appointing Ministers of Mercy

[Acts 6:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.

[Acts 6:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

Acts 2

To open the Book of Acts and read about the extraordinary love and unity among the first Christians is positively exhilarating to the soul. In [Acts 2:44-45](#), we read:

[Acts 2:44-45 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁴ And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

⁴⁵ and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

This was a literal fulfillment of our Lord's teaching:

[Luke 12:32-34 \(NASB\)](#)

³² "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

³³ "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

³⁴ "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Acts 4

In [Acts 4](#), we discover that these Christians continued their lavish display of love and care for one another. Their care for the needy became so extensive that money and goods had to be brought directly to the apostles for effective distribution. Theirs was not a Sunday-morning-only Christianity. It was what life together in the visible, Spirit-indwelt community of the risen Lord is to be like. It was the kind of self-sacrificing love that Jesus Christ expects His people to demonstrate.

[Acts 4:32-35 \(NASB\)](#)

³² And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the

resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

Deeply touched by this passage, the French reformer, **John Calvin (1509–1564)**, dramatically contrasts the attitude of these first Jewish Christians with the self-seeking behavior of many Christians in his day. (His words, we have to admit, also apply to our own day.) Calvin writes:

Now we must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of this narrative. In those days the believers gave abundantly of what was their own; we in our day are content not just jealously to retain what we possess, but callously to rob others.... They sold their own possessions in those days; in our day it is the lust to purchase that reigns supreme. At that time love made each man's own possessions common property for those in need; in our day such is the inhumanity of many, that they begrudge to the poor a common dwelling upon earth....

What motivated these first Christians to care for one another to this extent? Calvin is right when he says, "... love made each man's own possessions common property for those in need." Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another with the same kind of self-sacrificing love He had shown them:

John 15:12-13 (NASB)

¹² "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

¹³ "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

And He did just that. In the supreme act of love, He gave up His life for them and for us. Therefore, says the renowned Presbyterian theologian, **B. B. Warfield (1851–1921)**, "Self-sacrificing love is thus made the essence of the Christian life."