

# Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(18)

## 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.

### Acts 6

In Acts 6, we again see evidence of the believers' remarkable love for one another. The continuous outpouring of love and service of the church in Jerusalem was evident on a daily basis through its efforts to feed its poor widows:

#### Acts 6:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> 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.

Feeding the Christian widows was an enormous job that demanded considerable time, effort, and money. This was not token giving, nor was it Christmas time or tax season. This was authentic, Spirit-filled, love-filled Christianity in action—every day of the year.

### *A Warning to Christians Today*

This extravagant display of generosity, however, could not have existed if these Christians were worried about maintaining their standard of living or if the church at Jerusalem had spent all of its money on buildings or salaries. Nothing so effectively dulls the senses of Christians to the needs of hurting people as love for earthly possessions. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** writes:

“These earthly treasures are so powerful that they grip the entire personality. They grip a man’s heart, his mind and his will; they tend to affect his spirit, his soul and his whole being. Whatever realm of life we may be looking at, or thinking about, we shall find these things are there. Everyone is affected by them; they are a terrible danger.”

A Brazilian bishop and compassionate advocate of the poor confesses:

“I used to think, when I was a child that Christ might have been exaggerating when he warned about the dangers of wealth. Today I know better. I know how very hard it is to be rich and still keep the milk of human kindness. Money has a dangerous way of putting scales on one’s eyes, a dangerous way of freezing people’s hands, eyes, lips and hearts.”

Because of the overwhelmingly magnetic power that material possessions have to turn us away from godly compassion and eternal values, our Lord gave stern warnings against the dangers of greed:

**Luke 12:15 (NASB)**

**<sup>15</sup> Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."**

Let us heed our Lord’s warning, lest our hands, eyes, lips and hearts become frozen so that we cannot share with those who suffer need.

### ***The Ministers of word and deed***

The Christians’ marvelous display of love and care was threatened, however, by discriminating practices in the distribution of funds to the Hellenistic widows. Courageously, the apostles assumed full responsibility for the problem. Ultimately the injustice was their fault, since they were responsible for the pastoral oversight of the congregation. They recognized that they could no longer give the time and attention required to the task of administering the church’s funds to the needy. Things could not continue as they had. The apostles were busy, and as the church increased in size and complexity, so did their work load. Moreover, their primary duties as shepherds were to be prayer and the teaching of the Word, not widows’ relief. Something had to be done to relieve their expanding work load.

As a body of humble, godly pastors, they consulted with one another and their Lord about this problem. After agreeing on a proposed solution, Luke records that, **“the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples.”** After the congregation assembled, the apostles presented a plan for solving the problem. **“But select from among you, brethren”** they said, **“seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.”**

**Acts 6:2-3 (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup> So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.**

**<sup>3</sup> "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.**

The apostles' plan called for the formation of a body of seven men to whom they could hand over responsibility for the widows' care. They asked the people to select the men, but because of the apostles' intimate knowledge of the demanding task, they laid down qualifications to guide the congregation in the selection process. Not just any Christian could do the job. The apostles knew that the task demanded skilled men of high moral character who could be trusted to fulfill the responsibilities with integrity and ability. The wrong men could create worse problems and frustrate the apostles even more than the existing situation.

By solving the problem in this way, the apostles formed a new body of church officials. The two major categories of officials in the church at Jerusalem were the apostles and the Seven. The apostles were to devote themselves to prayer and to the proclamation of the Word. Hence, their work was primarily a verbal ministry. The newly appointed officials were to give themselves to a ministry of deeds—to provide loving service to needy brothers and sisters in Christ.