

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13 (21)

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.

Understanding The Seven's Task

If any organization is to maintain integrity and effectiveness, good management of funds and resources is essential.

Some Christians seem to equate disorganization with spirituality, but just the opposite is true. Disorganization and mismanagement always significantly multiplies problems and frustrate people. A newspaper reported that the **Director of the General Accounting Office, Charles Bowsher**, informed the Congress of the United States that 150 billion dollars or more of taxpayers' money would be wasted in 1992 by mismanagement: "Bowsher said the multibillion-dollar scandals ... were likely to be followed by billions more in fraud, waste and abuse for a common reason: lousy management."

Mismanagement and disorganization ruins families, businesses, governments, and churches. It is the product of the polluted soil of greed, laziness, carelessness, lovelessness, and selfishness. It is not from God. Therefore the family of God should not be mismanaged. God should receive our best effort, energy, and skill. The entire account of [Acts 6](#) is a sterling example of good organization and loving care for the people of God.

The task the apostles gave to the Seven was specific. Its nature is partially described as "the daily serving" ([Acts 6:1](#)) and "to serve tables" ([v. 2](#)). The Greek word for "tables," "*trapeza*," is often used figuratively to mean food or meals ([Acts 16:34](#)). But the term "tables" is also used figuratively for finances, a money table, or a bank ([Luke 19:23](#)). For example, the *Good News Bible* translates [Acts 6:2](#) this way: "It is not right for us to neglect the preaching of God's word in order to handle finances." It also renders the end of [Acts 6:1](#) as "daily distribution of funds." In *The New Testament in Modern English*, J. B. Phillips gives his rendering of [Acts 6:2](#): "It is not right that we should have to neglect preaching the Word of God in order to look after the accounts."

If "tables" here means money tables, then the Seven were to distribute money for food daily to the widows and keep careful accounts of their expenditures. If not, the Seven were to administer communal meals for these widows, which of course would involve money and accounting. It is difficult to be certain, but [Acts 4:34-35](#) suggests that

we are to understand “*tables*” to mean money tables where money is distributed and collected.

In detail, the Seven were:

- (1) to collect money and goods contributed to the needy ([Acts 4:34-35](#), [37](#); [Acts 5:2](#));
- (2) to distribute the money or goods to the needy ([Acts 4:35](#));
- (3) to ensure that the church justly and fairly distributed the money; and
- (4) to coordinate the church’s overall charitable services to the needy.

The Seven, in other words, were the church’s official ministers of mercy. Through them the church’s charitable activities were effectively centralized. They represented the church’s corporate response to its needy widows. As we all know, welfare activities can be easily abused by both giver and receiver. But the Seven, acting as the church’s official administrators of charity, could ensure that the church’s widows and other needy members would receive fair and highly efficient service.

Finally, the primary focus of the Seven’s task was to assist the needy of the Christian community, not all the poor of Jerusalem ([Acts 2:44-45](#); [Acts 4:32-37](#); [Acts 6:1](#)). It was imperative that the new community of the risen Savior care for its needy. Among the Jews in Jerusalem, as the German scholar, **Joachim Jeremias**, reveals in his book, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, groups and individuals provided assistance for needy fellow citizens in Jerusalem. In fact, some Jewish Christian widows may have been cut off from such help because of their newfound faith. So the Christians could do no less in the way of relief for their own.

The church in Jerusalem could have no credible witness to its unbelieving Jewish neighbors if it did not care for its widows. That doesn’t mean the Christians were to help no one outside their circle. Christians, as Scripture teaches, are to show mercy and love to all needy people ([Luke 10:37](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#)).

[Luke 10:37](#) (NASB)

³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

[1 Thessalonians 3:12](#) (NASB)

¹² and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you;

But the Seven’s first duty, *as the church’s official body of mercy ministers*, was to manage relief efforts for the church’s suffering members.

From Luke’s point of view, the gospel’s advancement was intimately connected with solving the poor widows’ problems. The gospel had to go forward to the ends of the earth, but at the same time needy members of the Christian community had to be supported or the gospel message would lose credibility. Immediately after Luke records the appointment of the Seven to care for poor widows, he writes, “**And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem ...**” ([Acts 6:7](#)).