

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.

Why The Need For Official Servants

[First Peter 4:10](#) affirms that every Christian has a spiritual gift from God that is to be used in serving others: “**As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**” If all Christians are to be servants, why then were they designated, official servants needed to minister to the needy in the Jerusalem church?

[Acts 6](#) demonstrates that certain service tasks require people who have select skills and proven moral character. Administering large amounts of charitable funds, for instance, requires people who possess irreproachable character, godly wisdom, and administrative skills. The sad truth is, some Christians steal. For these Christians it is too great a temptation to hold large amounts of money. Therefore, qualified, official servants are needed to perform these duties.

Furthermore, the Bible warns that the poor, especially widows, are vulnerable to exploitation. Jesus said to beware of the scribes “**who devour widows’ houses**” ([Luke 20:47](#)). Likewise, religious swindlers abound, preying on widows and the elderly. No church should expose people who need the most protection and care to unknown or unstable people. So, select servants will always be needed to officially represent the local church in delicate matters of trust and to coordinate the church’s charity.

A Final Warning

[Acts 6](#) is not a list of regulations and rules, so it should not be interpreted as a strict blueprint to be followed in every detail. For example, the apostles asked that seven men must be chosen. The question arises, then, if that means every church must have seven deacons. Some Christians of the second, third, and fourth centuries believed this and allowed only seven deacons per city. The council of **Neo-Caesarea** in the year **A.D. 315** stated in one of its canons that the number of deacons in a city must be seven.

The number seven, however, met the unique needs of the church at Jerusalem, as did the other detailed procedures of the apostles' plan. Thus a local church today has flexibility in how its deacons are chosen, how many are selected, and what they specifically are to do. As long as the deacons enable the shepherds of the church to carry out their primary duties, and as long as the deacons minister to the congregation's welfare needs in integrity, they are doing their job.

Acts 6: The Prototype for Deacons

Luke 1:1-4 (NASB)

¹ **Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,**
² **just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,**
³ **it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;**
⁴ **so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.**

Can we legitimately assume that the Seven in [Acts 6](#) are the forerunners to the later deacons? In the two passages in which Paul mentions deacons, [Philippians 1:1](#) and [1 Timothy 3:8-13](#), he offers no explanation of the deacons' origin or of their duties. His readers, of course, already knew the deacons' origin and responsibilities. But where do Christians today find such an explanation?

Although Luke does not state that the seven men mentioned in [Acts 6](#) were the first deacons, many commentators since the middle of the second century have assumed that the Seven were the first deacons. **Irenaeus (A.D. c. 130-C.200)**, bishop of Lyons in Gaul (modern France), was the first writer to clearly identify the Seven as **“deacons.”**