

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.

Objections To The Seven As The Prototype Of Deacons

Other biblical commentators, however, dismiss the idea that [Acts 6](#) has anything to do with deacons. **Gordon Fee, professor of New Testament at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada,** claims:

An appeal to [Acts 6:1-6](#) is of no value, since those men are not called deacons. In fact they are clearly ministers of the Word among Greek-speaking Jews, who eventually accrue the title “**the Seven**” ([Acts 21:8](#)), which distinguishes them in a way similar to “**the Twelve**.”

Although Luke does not state explicitly that the Seven were the first deacons, the content of Luke’s account, in which the apostles officially appointing a body of men to administer church funds to the needy, leads many people to conclude that there is a definite connection. Surely [Acts 6](#) should not be brushed aside. As we will see, **Dr. Fee’s** objections, which represent the most common objections, are misleading and unsound.

The Missing Word

It is a mistake to conclude that because the Seven are not actually called *deacons*, there is no connection between the Seven mentioned in **Acts** and the deacons mentioned in Paul’s epistles. The fact that Luke does not state that the Seven are deacons is consistent with his style of historical reporting in both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

Luke is very accurate in writing history, particularly in his use of terminology for persons and places. Concerning Luke’s ability as a historian, the late **F. F. Bruce**, one of the most prolific and distinguished commentators of the twentieth century, quotes the distinguished historian **Eduard Meyer’s** evaluation of Luke:

Eduard Meyer, the greatest twentieth-century historian of classical antiquity, considered Luke the one great historian who joins the last of the genuinely Greek historians, Polybius, to the greatest of Christian historians, Eusebius. Luke's work, he reckoned, "in spite of its more restricted content, bears the same character as those of the great historians, of a Polybius, a Livy, and many others."

When Luke refers to Philip in [Acts 21:8](#), he identifies him as an evangelist and "**one of the seven,**" but does not identify him as a deacon. The reason for this identification is that Luke accurately represents the historical situation and terminology used at the time of the events of [Acts 6](#). Undoubtedly the office-title *deacon*, (Greek, *diakonos*, which means "servant"), was not used at that time in the church's development. Even though Luke knew that people were called deacons in his day, he did not give in to the temptation of making the history of Acts fit later church development and terminology. In other words, he did not write anachronistically. Thus "**the record of Acts,**" Bruce states, "is true to its 'dramatic' date, i.e., to the date of the events and developments which it relates."

We might think that Luke should have at least commented on the connection between the Seven and the deacons, but again that was not his method of historical writing. For example, Luke does not tell us the position that our Lord's half-brother, James, held in the church, although James is a predominant figure in the Jerusalem church and was most likely an apostle ([Galatians 1:19](#)). Luke never clearly states that Paul—the great apostle to the Gentiles—was an apostle, although his apostleship is evident in Acts. (The statement in [Acts 14:4](#) about Paul's apostleship is somewhat ambiguous.)

Luke records momentous events during the beginning years of Christianity without adding any special comments ([Acts 8:5–19](#); [Acts 10:1–48](#); [Acts 13:1–4](#)). He does not match theological solutions or explanations with difficult-to-understand events or practices ([Acts 8:14–17](#); [Acts 19:1–7, 12](#); [Acts 21:23–26](#)). Likewise, in [Acts 6](#), Luke records no special name or title for this group of men.

A man eminently qualified to evaluate Luke's historical accuracy and style is **Sir William Ramsay (1851–1939)**, who is known for his brilliant, pioneer archeological and historical research on Acts. **Ramsay** writes:

It is rare to find a narrative so simple and so little forced as that of *Acts*. It is a mere uncoloured recital of the important facts in the briefest possible terms. The narrator's individuality and his personal feelings and preferences are almost wholly suppressed.... It would be difficult in the whole range of literature to find a work where there is less attempt at pointing a moral or drawing a lesson from the facts. The narrator is persuaded that the facts themselves in their barest form are a perfect lesson and a complete instruction, and he feels that it would be an impertinence and even an impiety to intrude his individual views into the narrative.

Dr. David Gooding, former professor of **Greek at Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland**, and an expert on the Greek Old Testament, the *Septuagint*, also comments on Luke's style of historical reporting: "Luke ... has added the barest minimum of interpretative comment beyond his record of the facts. He has not even invented titles for his sections." Therefore, the fact that Luke does not refer to the Seven as deacons or explain the relationship of the Seven to the later deacons is not surprising. His account speaks for itself.