

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(4)

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.

1. Personal qualifications (v.8).
2. Spiritual qualifications (v.9-10).
3. Family qualifications (v.11-12).
4. Results: reward reaped (v.13).

1. (1 Timothy 3:8) Deacons— Church, Officer of: deacons must be qualified; they must meet some personal qualifications.

1 Timothy 3:8 (NASB)

⁸Deacons likewise *must be* men of [grave] dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,

Many hold that the seven men chosen to oversee the distribution of food in Acts 6 were the first official deacons. The text, however, nowhere calls them deacons. In fact, the only use of *diakonia* in Acts 6 is in reference to the apostles (v. 4), and to the serving of food (v. 1).

Acts 6:1-6 (NASB)

¹Now 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.

²So 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.

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.

⁴"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

⁵The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from

Antioch.

⁶ And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

That again emphasizes its general usage. Nor are any of the seven ever called deacons elsewhere in Scripture. **The book of Acts** nowhere uses the term *diakonos* (deacon), which seems strange if an order of deacons was initiated in [Acts 6](#).

Elders are mentioned several times in Acts (cf. [Acts 11:30](#); [Acts 14:23](#); [Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23](#); [Acts 16:4](#); [Acts 20:17](#)), making the omission of any reference to deacons even more significant.

[Acts 11:30 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

[Acts 14:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³ When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

[Acts 15:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

[Acts 15:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴ When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

[Acts 15:6 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶ The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

[Acts 15:22-23 \(NASB\)](#)

²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

²³ and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

[Acts 16:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴ Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

[Acts 20:17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

All seven men were apparently Hellenistic Jews, since all have Greek names. It is unlikely that an order of deacons at the Jerusalem church would not include any Palestinian Jews.

Finally, they were in many respects more like elders than deacons. **Stephen** and **Philip**, the only two mentioned elsewhere in **Acts**, were evangelists (cf. [Acts 6:8](#); [Acts 8:5](#); [Acts 21:8](#)).

[Acts 6:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

[Acts 8:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵ Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them.

[Acts 21:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸ On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.

These seven men were chosen for a specific task. They did not hold the office of deacon, though their function of serving certainly foreshadowed that of the later deacons.

Paul wrote [1 Timothy](#) some thirty years after the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost. The church had grown and developed to the point that there was a need for official deacons. They would function as models of spiritual virtue and service.

To ensure that those given that responsibility were worthy, Paul lists several qualifications they must be measured by. **As with elders, those qualifications relate to their spiritual character, not their function.**

In fact, no specifics are given in Scripture as to the duties of deacons. **They were to carry out whatever tasks were assigned to them by the elders or needed by the congregation.**