

Polity, Part 2: “Officers: What Are They To Be and Do”

Various Passages

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We need biblically qualified leaders to lead and serve Christ’s church.

I. What are elders and deacons to *be*?

A. Elder Qualifications

1 Timothy 3:1-7 = ¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Motivation	Desires a noble task	
Character	Above reproach	A one-woman man
	Sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable	Hospitable
	Sober, gentle, peacemaking	Not a lover of money
	Mature and humble	Respected by outsiders
Abilities	Able to teach	Leader at home

General Teaching Office (All Believers – Men & Women)	<u>Colossians 3:16</u> = Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom...
Special Teaching Office (Elders – Men Only)	<u>1 Timothy 2:12</u> = I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man...

B. Deacons Qualifications

1 Timothy 3:8-13 = ⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

¹ Jamie Dunlop, “Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servants,” *9Marks Journal*, March 31, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/deacons-shock-absorbers-and-servants/>.

II. What are elders and deacons to *do*?

Elders *lead* ministry, deacons *facilitate* ministry, and the congregation *does* ministry.¹

A. Elder Responsibilities

Synonymous Terms	Emphasis	Responsibilities
Pastor	Feeding, nurturing, protecting the flock	Doctrine Discipline
Overseer	Leadership and direction for the church	Direction
Elder	Spiritual maturity required for the office	Distinction

Titus 1:9 = He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Luke 22:31-32 = “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, **but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.** And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Hebrew 13:17 = Obey your leaders and submit to them, for **they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.** Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

B. Deacon Responsibilities (Acts 6:1-7)

- Shock-absorbers who spot and meet tangible needs to protect and promote church unity.²
- Servants (*diakonos*) or “assistants” to the *elders* in order to serve and support them in carrying out their primary responsibilities.³

Life Application

- Pray that current and future church leaders would be biblically qualified.
- Pray and ask others to help you to develop in biblical qualifications even if you never serve formally in a leadership office.
- Pray about serving more formally to meet some of the tangible needs in our church.

² Matt Smetherst. *Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 74-79.

³ Matt Smetherst. *Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 79-84.