

# The Leadership of the Church

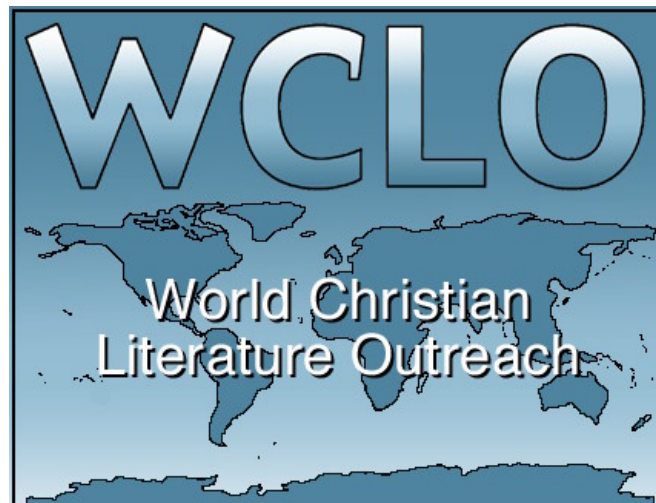
(Study of Elders and Deacons)

by

Dr. Russ Lawson

And

David High



## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to our families and to the church leaders, teachers and preachers who have influenced us throughout our lives. The concepts in this book would have not been possible without God's leading through all of those who have touched our lives.

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**(Study of Elders and Deacons)**

**by**

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# **THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH**

## **STUDY OF ELDERS**

### **ELDERS**

#### **Introduction:**

As we know, Christ is the head of the church, Ephesians 1:22. He has all authority in Heaven and on earth. God through his infinite wisdom though established in the church a pattern whereby, the work of the church might be overseen on earth. This is accomplished through a group of men called Elders. They have the ultimate responsibility of overseeing each local congregation and guiding it in God's ways. These men are chosen in each local congregation by the members. Their selection is guided by the qualifications listed in God's word.

#### **BACKGROUND**

1. Read Ephesians 4:11-12.
2. In this study we will be looking at the pattern God has set down concerning the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications of Elders (Pastors) and Deacons. We will also be looking at our responsibility, as members of the Lords Body to these leaders.
3. The job or office of an "Elder" is not something we have just dreamed up. The special assignment of Elders, is because of the Lord's direction for the church as it has been revealed in the New Testament. The Elders are not "The" authority, but rather have the authority to lead the congregation in decisions to carry out the commands of Christ.

#### **THE GREEK TERMS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH**

There are three Greek words which are translated into six English words used to identify "Elders". We will now look at each of these and try to identify their meanings.

##### **A. PRESBUTEROUS**

1. Translated as "Presbyter" or "Elder". The word is defined as "one advanced in life, and elder, a senior". It always implies dignity and wisdom.

##### **B. EPISKOPOS**

1. This word is translated as "Bishop" or "Overseer". The definition of the word is "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent."

C. POIMEN -

1. Translated as "Pastor" or "Shepherd". Defined as "one who tends, feeds, leads, cherishes, guides, governs, manages and protects a flock, (not merely a feeder), hence a shepherd"

(Definitions from "W.E. Bullinger)

**GREEK TRANSLATIONS**

	-----	PRESBYTER
PRESBUTEROS	---{	
	-----	ELDER (OLDER MAN)
	-----	OVERSEER
EPISKOPOS	---{	
	-----	BISHOP
	-----	SHEPHERD
POIMEN	-----{	
	-----	PASTOR (see note below)

These words are used in Acts 20:17,28; I Peter 5:1-3, This is the same office or same group of men.

**Note:** Though the Greek word "Poimen" is found 18 times in the Greek New Testament it is translated as "Pastor" only once in the English and is in reference to the office of "Elders" and not "preachers".

**THE DESIGNATION OF THE TERMS (OR NAMES)**

Even though many religious bodies use the terms "Elder", "Bishop" and "Pastor" as three separate and distinct offices, in the New Testament they designate the same office or group of men. In this section we will notice how the words are used in the scripture.

A. Notice Acts 20:17-28 (READ)

This particular passage contains all three Greek words and all are used in order to refer to the same group of men, "*the Elders*".

B. Notice the following things:

1. In (v.17) Paul wrote to "**The elders of the church**" at Ephesus, who he says met him in Miletus.
2. In (v.18-35) he speaks to these elders.
3. In (v28) Paul is still speaking to the elders and says: "**Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops**" (King James Version "overseers").
4. Notice here, Paul is speaking to the elders (*Presbuteros*) and says, that the Holy Spirit made them bishops (*Episkopos*). In this we can see that the "Elders" and "Bishop" are the same people or office in the church.
5. Notice that an "ELDER"-*PRESBUTEROS*", is the same as a "BISHOP"-*EPISKOPOS*".

C. Paul also in speaking to the elders and the bishops says; they are to "**Feed the church of the Lord**" (V28)

1. What are the elders to do?

a. they are to "**FEED the church,**"

b. The word "FEED" in the Greek is the word "POIMAINO." It is the verb form of "POIMEN", which is translated "Pastor" or "Shepherd".

c. Notice how these words are used in both noun and verb form:

- 1) Shepherds, shepherd flocks.
- 2) Pastors, pastor sheep
- 3) Feeders, feed the church

d. This phrase could just as easily have been translated: "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock, wherein the Holy spirit did set Overseers to "Poimaino" shepherd (or feed) the assembly of God"

e. The point that is being made is:

1) to "**Feed**" is actually to "**pastor**" or to "**Shepherd**" that is what Paul tells the Elders to do.

f. The Elders (*Presbuteros*) or the Bishops (*Episkopos*) are to Feed or Pastor (*Poimaino*) the church.

D. In this passage then, we can see that all three Greek words are used in speaking

of the same group of men.

1. We might put it like this. The elders, older qualified men, are bishops, who oversee the church, or who pastor the flock of God as spiritual shepherds.
2. **NOTE:** The word feed does not mean just to feed. It does not mean just to teach, but carries also the idea of protection, care and bringing back those who go astray.

#### **E. NOTICE: NOW I PETER 5:1-2,**

1. Again in this passage we find all three words in the Greek used.
2. Peter writes, "*The elders* (Presbuteros) *therefore among you I exhort ... tend* (Poimaino) *the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight* (episkopos).
3. We can see that Peter is in total agreement with Paul, that elders, bishops and pastors are all the same people or hold the same office.

#### **F. NOW NOTICE TITUS 1:5-7**

1. In this passage only two of the words are used, but we can still learn from it.
2. Paul is setting forth the qualifications of the elders here.
  - a. in (vs 5-6) he says that "*an elder* (Presbuteros) (V5) *must be blameless*"
  - b. In (v 7) he says "*For the bishop* (Episkopos) *must be blameless*"
  - c. We see then that qualified elders, become the overseers or bishops of the church.

## THE NUMBER OF ELDERS OVER A LOCAL CHURCH

### Introduction:

As another part of the New Testament pattern, the number of elders for each church is always in the plural, never in the singular in the scriptures.

Every New Testament example, presents a plurality of elders over a single congregation wherever that congregation may be found.

**EXAMPLES:** There was a plurality of elders in each of the churches at Iconium, Derby and Lystra appointed by Paul and Barnabas, Acts 14:21-23.

1. The apostles appointed “plural” elders.
  - a. Acts 14:23 *"And when they had appointed them elders in every church, ..."*
  - b. Notice the plural "*Elders*" in the singular” “*Church*". "*Elders in every Church*"
2. The church at Jerusalem had a number of elders,
  - a. Acts 15:2,4,6,22
3. The church at Ephesus had a plural number,
  - a. Acts 20:17,28
4. The church at Phillipi had both Bishops and deacons
  - a. Philippians 1:1
5. The church at Thessalonica had a number of "Them" (plural) that were over the saints,
  - a. I Thessalonians 5:12
6. Also, Titus was to appoint "Elders" at each place
  - a. Titus 1:5

**CONCLUSION:** There is no example in the New Testament of there being only one elder or pastor in any congregation. God's plan is to guide the church with a plurality of elders. If this is not true, then we cannot trust the scriptures to guide us in any area today.

## LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY

Most of the denominational world has developed a complex system of one ruling body or person over a group or churches of congregations. Many times this is known as a diocese.

The New Testament church is provided with a government for each individual local congregation. This government is sufficient for each church to be and to do everything God has designed for it to do. An important part of this system of self government is "Church Autonomy"

### I. "AUTONOMY" DEFINED:

A. The word simply means "Self-Rule" or "Self-Government"

1. Local autonomy of a church means, that each local church is a self governing body.
2. Other congregations, local or distant have no rule over one another. Its own government is limited to the boundaries of its own membership.
3. The church is referred to in two ways: "Universal" and "Local". The "Universal church" would be all of God's people wherever they might live in the world. The "Local church" would be each individual congregation in any particular location.

B. EXAMPLES:

1. Acts 20:17,18 (The church at Ephesus)

a. *"Paul sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church"*

b. That is: the church which was at Ephesus. The limits of the authority of that eldership was confined to the church over which they were Bishops or the local church.

c. In verse 28, Paul charged them to:

*"Take heed... to all the flock, In which the Holy Spirit hath made you Overseers (Bishops)"*

d. We can see then the extent of the oversight of an eldership. It is only to the "*Flock*", (Paul said) "*In which*" or "*Over the which*" they have been appointed overseers, (the local church).

This would limit their oversight to just those which they had been "Appointed over".

2. Notice now I Peter 5:1-3

- a. In this passage we have three area at which we will be looking concerning local church autonomy.
- b. I Peter 5:1 *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed (or tend) the flock of God which is among you, taking (or exercising) the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre (money), but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."*
- c. American Standard Version reads in (verse 3) *"Neither lording it over the charge allotted you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock."*

1) First of all Peter speaks of, *"The flock ...which is among you"*

This phrase restricts the elders to the oversight of the church or "flock" among whom they tend or feed, the local church.

The Greek word for feed is the word "POIMAINO" which means "to shepherd" and as we know shepherds tend only one flock, their own, not the flock of someone else.

In this verse we have an illustration of an eldership caring for a local church even as a shepherd would care for his flock. This flock would be only one particular flock, the local church.

- 2) Next, notice Peter speaks of *"the charge allotted you"* (ASV) *"God's Heritage"* *"the flock that is your charge"* (RSV). This phrase come from the Greek word "KLARON," which is used in meaning "a portion of the church" universal or throughout the world. A better translation might be, *"Neither as lording it over your portion of the church"*, or as the RSV states *"the charge allotted you"*.

The local church is all that is allotted to each eldership and no more.

3. Notice next, Peter says, (V3)

- a. The elders are to be *"Ensamples"* or *"Examples to the flock"*.
- b. The Greek word is "TUPOS" is used here and is translated as: "Ensample, example, pattern or form."
- c. Example of usage: "a mold into which lead or wax is poured, each image produced is exactly the same as the mold."

- d. Through this word then we see that the elders are to be examples or patterns after which the church can mold their lives and become exactly like them in their service to God.

## **II. What is the extent of the authority of the elders of the local church?**

Christ has been given all authority over the church, (Ephesians 1:22-23). The elders have been given a work to do that is covered under the umbrella of Christ's authority. The work of the elders is defined in the scripture in at least five different areas. (1) They must be watchmen. Acts 20:28-31, esp. V 31. (2) They must mature the church, Ephesians 4:11-16. (3) They must discipline the flock they are over, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15, esp. V 12. (4) They are to Shepherd the flock, Acts 10:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3. (5) They are to Pray for the sick, James 5:12-18.

All authority which the elders have concerning the local church is tied up in these scriptures seen above. Do the elders have the authority to watch out for any person, persons or influence which may bring harm to Christ's church? Yes. Do the elders have the authority to direct the teaching which will lead to the maturing of the church? Yes. Do the elders have the authority to discipline the church? Yes, (understanding discipline means more than just punishment). They have the authority under the umbrella of Christ's authority to do all of these things and more that are implied by the job descriptions which they are given for them to do their work.

We might note also that this authority is only good as long as the ones they exercise it over agree to submit to it. Hebrews 13:17 tell the church to, "***Obey them that have rule over you, and submit to them, for they watch in behalf of your souls.***" 1 Thessalonians 5:13 tells the church to, "***esteem them (the elders) exceedingly higher in love for their work's sake.***" The church is a volunteer organization. People submit to the authority of the elders because they believe it is the thing which God would have them to do. That is why God was so specific in listing the qualifications for those who would be elders. If they are not respected and knowledgeable of God's word, people will not follow or submit to their lead.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Common sense tells us then that for Elders or Bishops to be imitated they must have constant contact with the church. That is the only way in which shepherds can shepherd (Greek-"POIMEN") the church.

We can conclude then that it would be impossible for a man to be a Bishop of a group of churches spread over a city or large area and be in constant contact with each one in a way in which his life might be imitated.

God designed the organizational structure of the New Testament church in such a way as

(1) to provide for a plural number of elders over a single congregation of the church and  
(2) so that they could rule well as examples and prevent the spread of error from one congregation to another.

## THE WORK OF ELDERS

### Introduction

In I Timothy 3:1, Paul writes, "*Faithful is the saying, If a man seeks the office of a bishop, he desires a good work*". Probably one of the biggest problems we face is the mis-use of authority in the church which is often the mis-use of the office of Elders.

Many times men desire the "office" or "title" for what would seem to be good reasons, but really have not desired the "WORK" that comes with the office.

In this section of our study we will look at the work of Elders as well as the Qualifications which assure they are able to do the work.

Only by understanding the work of the Elders will we realize the importance of following the "Qualifications" which God has set down and requires to church to find in the men chosen to be Elders. We have a tendency as humans to not hold strongly to the qualifications which God requires, because we want to have Elders in our churches. It is important that we study and understand what God has to say on this matter.

### THE WORK

A. First an Elder is to be a "WATCHMAN".

1. Paul realized what would happen after he left the church at Ephesus. That false teachers would try and come in and take over the church from inside, perhaps even one of the Elders themselves.
2. Because of this Paul gave special instructions to the Elders in Ephesus,
  - a. READ Acts 20:28-31
3. In Verse 31, Paul says, "*Wherefore*" or "*Therefore*" or "*Because of the false teachers, 'WATCH'*" (KJV) OR "*BE ALERT*" (RSV)
4. Also Hebrews 13:17 tells us,
  - a. "*Obey them that have rule over you, and submit to them, for they WATCH in behalf of your souls*"
  - b. We understand the purpose of a watchman or guard. He watches for thieves and warns us if he sees them coming or anything wrong going on. He is there to protect those he is watching.
  - c. That is one of the works of Elders, to watch and warn!

B. A second work of the Elders is "TO MATURE THE CHURCH".

1. READ Ephesians 4:11-16

This gives us a list of people who have been given the work of helping to "perfect" or "Mature" the church.

In this list are Evangelist, Teachers and Pastors (elders).

2. The church is many times spoken of as "Children" or "Spiritual babies" who are "*tossed to and fro* (from one side to another) *and carried about with every wind of doctrine*", (Ephesians 4:14)
3. They are tossed from one side to another, because they lack knowledge and maturity in Christ.
4. The "Pastors" (or Elders) along with the evangelist and teachers are to "*Speak the truth in Love*" (V15) to the church. They are to help the church grow and be strong (mature) by seeing that the church knows and understands the truth.
5. Notice the following chart of Ephesians 4:11-16.

### EPHESIANS 4:11-16

The Provision of God                      His Desired Result  
"SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE"-V 15  
(TO SPIRITUAL CHILDREN - OR TEACHING THE CHURCH)

<u>(The Job)</u>	<u>(The Results God Wants)</u>
<u>Verse 11</u>	
Apostles .....	(Maturing or perfecting) V12
Prophets .....	Grown up V13
Evangelist .....	To Manhood V13
Pastors (Elders) .....	No longer children V14
Teachers	

C. Another work of the Elders is to DISCIPLINE THE FLOCK THEY ARE OVER.

1. Usually when we hear the word "Discipline", We immediately think of some harsh action, but discipline does not always require harsh action. Many times it means to control with a gentle guiding hand, to train. It is to guide, train and lead to maturity in the proper way.

2. READ I Thessalonians 5:12-15

a. Notice the scripture says, "*Esteem them* (the elders) *exceedingly highly in love for their work's sake.*" (V13)

b. We see what their work is in this passage,

1) to "*Admonish*" (V12) ("Put in mind of, instructing". E.W. Bullinger)

a) In (Verse 14) we see who they are to admonish,

b) "*Them that are unruly*" (KJV) or "*the disorderly*" (ASV)

c) Those who are not walking according to the rules of God.

d) to "*Comfort the feebleminded*" (KJV) or "*Encourage the fainthearted*" (ASV) "*Encourage the timid*" (NIV)

1) Those are brethren who have spirits or hearts need lifting up or encouraged.

4) Next we see that they are to "*Support the weak*", (V14)

This is the babes in Christ or Members who have had their lives shattered by problems. Those people who's faith is not strong enough o support themselves

5) Fourth, Elders must, "*See that none render evil for evil unto any man*" V15

This is the idea of guiding men in times of trouble, to see that people continue to act as Christians even when other people treat them badly.

D. Next the Elders are to "*SHEPHERD THE FLOCK*" (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3)

1. The word translated as "*Feed*" in Acts 20:28 is the Greek word "Poimaino" which we have looked at before.

It is the verb form (a word of action) of the word "Poimen" which is translated as "Shepherd" or "Pastor". The work of a shepherd is to shepherd (take care of) the flock of God (the church).

2. This is the same word used in I Peter 5:2, which is translated as "*Tend*" or "*Feed*".

3. In Luke 15:3-7 we see some of the work which a shepherd is to do. READ LUKE 15:3-7

4. We see then, that a "*Pastor*" or "*Shepherd*" is to care for his sheep and bring to bring them back safely if they stray, or leave the other sheep.

This is talking about the work of a "Spiritual Shepherd", which means an Elder is not only to teach, but to care for the church members spiritual well being.

- E. The next work of the Elders is to "***PRAY FOR THE SICK***", **READ James 5:13-18.** The scriptures tell us, that the prayer of godly men will do much good ... (V16) This is not talking about doing miracles, but rather that God will listen to those who are close to Him.....

He will answer the prayers of the "*Righteous*" elders on behalf of the sick, according to His will

To anoint with oil was a custom of the day. They sometimes poured Olive oil on wounds as medicine, but more often it was used symbolically to represent the blessing of God.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The work of being an Elder is an important job and can only be accomplished by those men that are truly qualified to be elders according to God's word.

The Elders work involves dealing with the lives and problems of different people and it takes older experienced Christian men to deal with these many problems.

This work cannot be done just at a worship service of the church. It takes men who are willing to give of their lives to visit the members in their homes and know the people and their problems. Men who can deal with these problems from their hearts based upon God's word.

The Elders are to: (1) "Watch", warn according to the instruction of the Word of God. (2) Mature the church, speaking and teaching the words of life while building up the members. (3) Discipline (remind them of what it is to walk in God's path) the individual members for the sake of purity and unity in the church and so that they will be saved. (4) Shepherd the flock (church) and protect it against false teachers, seek out and return strays and bring those who are in the world back to the faith and obedience of God's word.

## **BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS**

### **AS SEEN IN I TIMOTHY AND TITUS:**

I Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The qualities' one is to find in those who are selected to be elder is made known in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. In our study, we will look at these qualities from the original language (Greek) and historically from their culture. This is a position that requires much responsibility and should be taken seriously by anyone who seeks to do this work.

1. **ABOVE REPROACH OR SELF CONTROLLED** (*BLAMELESS*) {I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6} The word used in I Timothy for "Blameless" (Greek - anepilempton - above reproach) - means 'not to be taken hold upon' - if one is to be taken hold of there must be a handle, i.e., some obvious flaw in his character upon which men seize to bring upon him blame and reproach. The word Paul uses in Titus means "unaccused", or a man of excellent reputation among men, having honesty and integrity (Greek - anegkletos - beyond reproach, without fault).
2. **HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE** {I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6} - There is several arguments over what is meant here. Note some of the opinions stated:
  - a) "The Greek literally means that he must be 'the husband of one wife.' Some take it to mean only that the Christian leader must be a married man, and it is possible that the phrase could mean that.... Some few take it to mean that the Christian leader can not marry a second time, even after his wife's death... But in its context here we can be quite sure that the phrase means the Christian leader must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity."
  - b) Some have suggested that an elder doesn't have to be married (this is heresy). Even outsiders have recognized that God's word requires a man to be married. David King states "We consider that either polygamy or celibacy disqualifies for the eldership. It has been urged that celibacy cannot do so, as in the case of Paul and Timothy. Paul and Timothy would have been disqualified; certainly they would, and there is no evidence they were not. No one can produce the proof that the qualifications for an apostle, an evangelist, and an elder are the same... nothing is more seemingly and desirable than that overseers in the church, whose duties require settled residence and involve frequent interposition between husband and wife, parents and children, should themselves be married men, who have given evidence that they understand and rightfully deport themselves in that relationship."
  - b) "Thomas M. Linsay, D.D., Principal of Glasgow College, in his book, "The Church and The Ministry in the Early Centuries," says "Titus is told that a presbyter or elder must be a man who is above suspicion, who is a faithful husband, and whose children are Christians of well-regulated lives.' In a footnote on the same page is contained the

following explanation: 'A faithful husband appears to be the best translation of "mias gunaikos andra" (the Greek verbiage), one who acts on the principles of Christian morality and is not led astray by the licentious usage's of the surrounding heathenism.'

3. **TEMPERATE OR NOT QUICK TEMPERED** {I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7} The word used in I Timothy originally meant abstinence from wine. Here it is used metaphorically of our attitude in life (Greek - nephalion - temperate, sober). While in Titus, Paul speaks of one who is quickly angered. Some can refer to this type of person as a hot-head. In contrast an elder should be understanding and compassionate toward others. (Greek - orgilon - quick tempered)
4. **PRUDENT (*SELF CONTROLLED*)** {I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8} - This virtually means 'in control of strength.' An elder must have the judgment how to use his abilities in a proper manner. (Greek - sophrona - sound judgment, self-control)
5. **RESPECTABLE** {I Timothy 3:2} - This term describes a man's behavior. The word in Greek (Greek - kosmios - well behaved, respectable, befitting, modest) had two special usage's. It was common in tributes and inscriptions to the dead. And it was commonly used to describe the man who was a good citizen. Plato defines the man as "the citizen who is quiet in the land, who duly fulfills in his place and order the duties that are incumbent upon him as such." It describes the man whose life and in whose character all things are in harmony.
6. **HOSPITABLE** {I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8} - Since an elder is one who oversees and guards the flock, his home should be open to guests especially those of the household of faith. He should be one with love and concern. (Greek - philozenia - hospitality)
7. **ABLE TO TEACH** {I Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9} - The letters to Timothy and Titus are unique in the New Testament in the use of the word 'didaskalia' to refer to the act of teaching and what is taught. It is one of the real problems of our times that the teaching ministry of the Church is not exercised as it should. There is much topical preaching and exhortation. However, there is a lack of instruction to make Christians mature. The finest and the most effective teaching is not done by speaking, but by being or doing. (Greek - didaktikos - taught, imparted). Now let us note the words Paul used in the letter to Titus:  
  
"***Hold firmly to the trustworthy message***" - The elder must be able to stand firm in the trustworthy (faithful) word. He must be able to discern the Word of God for two reasons:
  - a. ***Encourage others by sound doctrine*** - The word encourage is also rendered 'exhort,' in other words they are to encourage and incite the flock (Christians) to do what is good. In other words, they are to instruct the members of the local church with healthy, pure doctrine so that they can grow spiritually.
  - b. ***Refute those who oppose it*** - The word used here is (Greek - elegchein) it means to rebuke or refute one in such a way that he is compelled to admit his error.

8. **NOT ADDICTED TO WINE** (*NOT GIVEN TO DRUNKENNESS*) {I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7} An elder must not be a drunkard. "It describes the character of a man who, even in his sober moments, acts with the outrageousness of a drunken man." (Greek - paroinos - drunkard, given to strong drink).
9. **NOT PUGNACIOUS** (*NOT VIOLENT*) {I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7} An elder should not be one who strike with either his fist or his tongue. He should not be a harsh person, but rather a considerate and gentle man. (Greek - plekten - a quick tempered or violent man)
10. **GENTLE** {I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7}- this same word is translated forbearance, or gentleness (Phillipians 4:5; Colossians 3:13) kindness or graciousness (Acts 24:4), the gentleness of Christ (II Corinthians 10:1), gentleness in a master's treatment to his servant (I Peter 2:18), and gentleness concerning the conduct of all Christians (Titus 3:2). (Greek - epieike - gentle, forbearing, considerate).
11. **UNCONTENCIUS** (*NOT QUARRELSOME*) {I Timothy 3:3} - This describes one who is peaceful (Greek - amachos - peaceful). The Greek word originally meant one who is not anxious to fight. Similar words in the Greek refer to those who fight or have disputes over words and among their fellow men.
12. **FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY** (*NOT A LOVER OF MONEY*) {I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7} - The word used in I Timothy is synonymous to the word used in Titus. This word (Greek - philarguron - not greedy for money) is used by Paul in I Timothy 6:10 and II Timothy 3:2. The same terminology is used in Luke 16:14 and Hebrews 13:5. The reason for this quality in the elders is that men were using religion as a means to gain money. Paul rebuked them in I Timothy 6:5-10. Note how Paul uses similar terminology in Titus: "*Not pursuing dishonest gain*" - Covetousness was certainly forbidden under the Law and still is. An elder can not be one controlled by materialism or possessions. This is the description of a man who does not care how he makes money just as long as he makes it. He must be one who will not abuse his privilege with money. He should be one that the church can trust with its money. (Greek - aischrokerdes - greedy for material gain)
13. **ONE WHO MANAGES HIS HOUSEHOLD WELL** (*HE MUST MANAGE HIS OWN FAMILY WELL*) {I Timothy 3:4}- The thought of overseeing a Church is a very big task. If one wants to see how a man leads he can begin by seeing how he oversees his own household. If a man fails at home, how will he be able to oversee the affairs of a much larger and much more complicated body? The word in the Greek for manages has reference to ruling. (Greek - proistemi - to be a leader, have authority over, manage, care for, give help, engage in, practice). Therefore, a man's home life will tell us how he will work in public.
14. **KEEPING HIS CHILDREN UNDER CONTROL WITH ALL DIGNITY** (*SEE THAT HIS CHILDREN OBEY HIM WITH PROPER RESPECT*) {I Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6} - The ability for one to keep his children under control will show how one manages

and rules his house. The words for "under control with all dignity" can also be rendered 'submissive and respectful.' (See note on "faithful children, page 36). Notice how these terms are used:

- a) *Submissive* - This implies having an agreeable or compliant attitude. It is used of a wife's submission to her husband (Titus 2:5) a woman's submissiveness in public worship (I Timothy 2:12) and Jesus' obedience to his parents (Luke 2:51). Paul also had written earlier to the Church in Ephesus that their children should be obedient to their parents (Ephesians 6:1-4). (Greek - hupatasso - to submit)
- b) *Respectful* - This is the word that Paul used to exhort Christians to live in relation to kings and authorities (I Timothy 2:2). If a man's child can not respect his father it will be a discredit to his ability to lead and will also reflect how others will respond to his leadership as well. (Greek - semnotes - respectful, proper conduct, seriousness).

1) **Believe** - Again people are split on the meaning of this passage. Note the following views:

- a) Since elders would be chosen from older men, it would be natural to assume that most of them would have children; and that such children would be old enough to be Christians. It is not right or healthy for the elder to have pagan children. If the prospective elder accepted Christ late in life, he might not be at fault for the unbelief of his children, but he can not ignore his relationship with them. If his children are pagan in their attitude and conduct, it will reflect on him and his service to Christ.
- b) This cannot mean that his children must all be converted, for that is not in the power of any man (II Samuel 23:5). The phrase can only intend that they shall be brought up in the principles and doctrines of Christ, and as long as they remain at home they shall be restrained, disciplined and obedient to their parents.
- c) Faithful is the more usual translation of 'pistos' than believing and it is the context of "faithful to the father's leadership" rather than "faithful to Christ."

2) **Not open to charge of being wild or disobedient** - the words translated "being wild" are also translated "riot" this refers to a life of loose living. To be "disobedient" is also translated "unruly" that means unable to control oneself or one in insubordination.

15. **NOT A NEW CONVERT (NOT BE A RECENT CONVERT)** {I Timothy 3:6} - The word in the Greek here means 'newly planted.' The word was used in the first century to note those who were recently baptized. Therefore, Paul is using the term figuratively to note one who is a recent believer in the Church. (Greek - neophuton - recently converted). The reason for this quality is that he will not become puffed up or conceited. This was a problem with men in Churches in the first century (I Corinthians 4:6,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; I Timothy 6:4; II Timothy 3:4). It is also noteworthy that one who does become puffed up and begins to use his position as one of power will find "the condemnation of

the devil." This is the particular judgment that God has reserved for Satan. Therefore, power and pride are big factors when one applies this quality upon a man.

16. **A GOOD REPUTATION WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH** (*HE MUST HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION WITH OUTSIDERS*) {I Timothy 3:7} - Not only is one to have a good relationship with those inside the Church, he is to also have a good reputation with those who do not belong to the Church. The word outsiders refer to those who are not members of the body of Christ. If the Church is to have any influence to those who are in the world its leaders must have a good reputation in both places. (Greek - exothen - outsider, unbeliever)
17. **NOT SELF WILLED** (*NOT OVERBEARING*) {Titus 1:7} - This virtually means 'in control of strength.' An elder must be able to judge how to use his capabilities in a proper manner. (Greek - sophrona - sound judgment, self-control)
18. **NOT QUICK TEMPERED** {Titus 1:7} - This speaks of one who is quickly angered. Some people refer to this type of person as a hot-head. Thus, in contrast an elder should be understanding and compassionate toward others. (Greek - orgilon - quick tempered)
19. **LOVING WHAT IS GOOD** {Titus 1:8} - A man is a good man because he has a good heart and surrounds himself with good things. This shows the sincerity of his character. (Greek - philagathos - loving what is good)
20. **JUST** (UPRIGHT) {Titus 1:8}- An elder should be fair in his dealings with others, he should not let prejudice and partialities control him. He should be a man with integrity and one who practices in his own life what he preaches to others, (Greek - dikaion - conforming to the standard, will or character of God; upright, righteous, good; just, right, proper, in a good relationship with God, fair, honest, innocent).
21. **DEVOUT** (HOLY) {Titus 1:8}The Greek word is hard to translate, for it describes the man who reverences the fundamental decencies of life, the things that go back beyond any man made law. (Greek - osiov - holy, devout, pious). He is devoted to God and His service.
22. **SELF CONTROLLED** (DISCIPLINED) {Titus 1:8}The Greek word describes the man who has achieved complete self-mastery. This applies to one's appetites and actions. He must be one who is disciplined to get the job accomplished. (Greek - egkparte - self- controlled).

## SPECIAL NOTE ON "FAITHFUL CHILDREN"

### Notes on Titus 1:6, an alternate view

**Introduction:** In dealing with this passage concerning "believing" or "faithful" children, most writers say very little. Most writers say simply, "the verse says, "believing or faithful children", therefore the children must (1) express faith in Christ, or (2) be faithful or believing to the point of being Christians." Few writers say more.

In light of our attempt to study the qualifications of elders with more clarity, let us apply ourselves to the question more deeply.

#### **Definition of Word:**

"Faithful", (Greek-Pistos), (to persuade, win by words, influence hence it may be taken either actively or passively, according to the meaning of the verb. In this instance it seems to have the active meaning.

**Actively:** trusting, believing." (a critical lexicon and concordance, W.E. Bullinger, Samuel Bagster and Sons limited; P. 272

#### **Comments:**

The word "may at times mean "faithful" as in I Timothy 1:12 and Matthew 25:21, 23 or Trustworthy" as in I Corinthians 4:2. The word believers, literally "believing children" or "faithful children" does not have inherent within it the concept of God. The word must be taken in context and here would seem to indicate a relationship of the child to the elder as his or her father, suggesting trustworthiness and loyalty."

In the verse we are considering (Titus 1:6) if we take this understanding then we could translate this verse, "***His children must be trustworthy, and not have a reputation of being wild or disobedient.***" It is the relationship between the elder and his family which seem to be examined here, not the question of whether or not his children are Christians.

One reason for accepting this view is that this would bring harmony between I Timothy 3:4 "***having his children in subjection with all gravity***", and Titus 1:6 "***having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.***" this would eliminate the addition of the restriction (as taught by some) that children of elders, must be believers or faithful Christians, which is not found in the book of I Timothy.

## HARMONY OF THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

### I Timothy 3:1-7.....Titus 1:6-9

#### (Positive)

1. Blameless (without reproach).....Just (upright, righteous)  
.....Blameless
2. Husband of one wife.....Husband of wife
3. Vigilant (temperate).....Temperate (self control)  
.....Holy (free from Wickedness)
4. Sober (self control).....Sober (disciplined)
5. Good behavior.....Lover of good
6. Given to Hospitality.....Lover of Hospitality
7. Apt to teach.....Holding fast faithful words
8. Ruling his own house.....Faithful Children
- 9.....Manage his family well
10. Children in subjection.....Not accused of riot or unruly
11. Good report of them that are outside
12. Patient (gentle).....Not soon angry
- 13.....all aged men, Titus 2:2
- 14..... Without reproach (Blameless)

#### (Negative)

15. Not given to wine.....Not given to wine
16. Not contentious.....Not quarrelsome
17. Not pursuing money.....Not pursuing money
18. Not covetous (Loving money) " " "
19. Not contentious.....Not self-willed
20. Not a novice (recent convert).....Sound in the faith

\*\*Note: this chart originally developed by Ellis Crum, (Edited by Russ Lawson)

In this chart gives us a visual comparison of the qualifications for elders as seen in the books of I Timothy and Titus.

We must however ask some questions about the text. If the children are to be faithful, to who are they to be faithful. The text would lean itself more towards being faithful (trustworthy) to the authority of the elder (their parent), not accused of riotous living or being unruly.

#### **Conclusion:**

We as Christian parents must try to win our children to Christ and have them be believers. Especially those who would lead the church and be examples to the flock. *The question* we need to consider is, are we going too far in using this verse (Titus 1:6) as a proof text that the elders children "Must be" believer or Christians?

Certainly it would be both wise and expedient if an elders children were Christians, but the strength of such an argument is somewhat doubtful in this verse.

To hold that children must be believers or not, that is the question which we must each

decide. The difficulty for many people is that many stand on pre-conceived opinions or teachings handed down as being truth. Let us search the scripture and make our requirements for the elders, be based upon clear teachings.

# THE SELECTION OF ELDERS

## INTRODUCTION:

In the churches of Christ we follow what is written in the Scriptures in determining God's plan for His church and its leadership.

In the case of the selection of elders, there is no clear or detailed pattern for either the process of choosing elders or for their length of tenure in office.

Therefore, we must look at history and also how other church leaders were selected to see what is the best process by which elders can be selected.

In this study we will first look at history, then we will look at the passages in reference to elders in the book of Acts and Titus, and then we will see how other leaders were selected in local congregations.

## HISTORY

1. Think about the background in which the teaching concerning the eldership was written:
  - a. The use of “elders” as leaders was an ancient institution in Israel, as well as other nations, at the village level up to even national levels.
  - b. It dominated the Jewish synagogue leadership of New Testament times.
  - c. Every synagogue was led by elected elders.
  - d. There is a very high probability that the New Testament Christians would have organized their local assemblies according to the pattern used from Israel's past and the synagogues - that is, under an eldership selected by the members of the people or synagogue.
2. Historians agree that elders in both Judaism and the early church were selected by the process of voting.
  - a. The Encyclopedia Judaica states concerning the selection of elders in Israel that: "The individual could participate in the large gatherings of his unit, which in turn gave him a voice in tribal and clan decisions, including the selection of tribal institution leaders."
  - b. In Clement of Rome's, Epistles to the Corinthians, there are two interesting facts: (I Clement, XLIV.2-SLV 2). {This was written in about 96 AD.}
    - 1) Elders were installed with the consent of the whole congregation.
    - 2) The appointment or ordaining was performed by the local evangelist.

c. In another early writing, Didache, dated around 115 AD, chapter 15 notes several things of interest:

- 1) Congregations elected their elders and deacons.
- 2) There was a plurality of elders in every church.
  
- 3) Congregations were only entitled to elect elders who were qualified.
  - a) The Epistles of Cyprian, especially Ep. 68, show that the consent of the whole congregation was used in the choice of their elders. This was continued in the middle of the third century.
  - b) A very noted church historian, Philip Schaff, in his book, History of the Christian Church, (volume 4, p.241) wrote:
    - 1) That the Greek church elected elders even after the 8th century.
    - 2) The Latin church also exercised the election of elders by the people after the 11th century.

#### **ELDERS AS SEEN IN THE BOOK OF ACTS AND TITUS:**

1. The first reference to elders is found in Acts 11:30.
  - a. Elders suddenly appear here without any explanation.
  - b. By the context, these men were from Jerusalem, but how they were installed in this capacity is not stated.
  - c. In passages such as Acts 15:2,4,6,22, and 23, and 16:4, we find that they met with the apostles as a decision making body.
2. The next significant record of elders is found in Acts 14:23.
  - a. The scripture speaks of the appointment of elders in the Gentile churches.
  - b. Here the verb "*appointed*" refers to the subject "Paul and Barnabas."
  - c. It is very interesting to notice the verb used in this passage. The word appoint can also be translated to choose. This verb actually is translated 'to elect by the showing or raising of hands, however, here is given the meaning of appoint or choose. (Greek - cheirotoneo - appoint, choose, elect by the raising of the hand).

- d. Whether Paul and Barnabas choose the elders with the congregations' participation or whether they choose the elders themselves seems to divide many Biblical scholars.
3. In Titus 1:5, we find that Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in every city.
- a. The word for appoint means to ordain, to set over, or to put in charge.
  - b. The same word is used in Acts 6:3 (Greek - kathistemi - put in charge, appoint, make [someone to be something]) as the disciples choose men to serve.
  - c. The word appoint in this verse is different from the word used in Acts 14:23. Therefore, Titus had the responsibility to set the elders forth before the congregation.

### **THE SELECTION OF OTHER LEADERS IN A CONGREGATION:**

1. The leaders of congregations are defined in I Timothy 3. There are two different leaders described here. These men are men who aspire to an office.
2. The word used for office can also mean their place of service, however, it is generally translated as an office noting an official designation.
3. The word "*likewise*" notes that a deacon holds an office just as an elder (I Timothy 3:8).
4. The selection of deacons (Greek - diakoneo - deacon, to serve as a deacon) is seen in Acts 6:1-6.
  - a. This was a process which involved the brethren (Greek - adelphoi - brother, fellow believer) where to select (Greek - episkeptomai - pick out, look for) men to serve the widows.
  - b. After these men were "selected" they were to be appointed as is seen above in Titus 1:5.

### **CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded from history, that it was a common practice that men were selected to be elders from the local congregation. If we look only in the New Testament writings, and look at the passages where the eldership is mentioned, we can come to the conclusion that there is no conclusive way to go about the selection of elders (and rightly so). However, we can assume that a selection by the people of the congregation would be an adequate manner in which to choose leaders as seen in Acts 6:1-6.

## Leadership Part II

### DEACONS

#### INTRODUCTION:

There is a special group of men in the church known as "Deacons." They are set apart to do a particular work, as we see indicated in Phillipians 1:1 and I Timothy 3, where Paul mentions not only the Saints, but Bishops and Deacons.

Just what their work is or what their duties are, must come from a further study of the scriptures as well as the original language. With this in mind, let us begin looking at the office of a "Deacon."

#### I. DEFINITION: (The term and it's significance)

##### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

A. The Hebrew word used to describe those who had been given a personal service to a ruler, particularly of those who are set aside to perform some special service in the worship of God was "sarat." This was the equivalent to the Greek word "diakonos" found in the New Testament.

1. These men were considered of a high rank in their society.
2. They merited special respect because they had a very close relationship with the ruler they served.
3. From the history of how things were done in the synagogue, we have some idea of the deacons or "young men" at Jerusalem as preparing the rooms for meetings, distributing alms, maintaining order at the meetings, and serving in whatever means necessary in the assemblies.

B. The Greek word translated as "deacon" or "minister" is "DIAKONOS".

1. The word "Deacon" is something like the work "Baptism" in that it is not an actual translation from the Greek, but rather a transferring (transliteration) to the English.
2. Definition: "**Diakonos**," the English word "deacon" primarily means, a servant, whether it is someone doing the work of a servant, or helping and giving (rendering) free service, without any particular description of the person or the work being done." (W.E. Vine, Dictionary of New Testament Words- Edited by RL)
3. Definition: "One who executes the commands of another ... a servant, attendant, minister." -Thayer

### C. NOTICE:

1. That the word SERVANT, (Deacon) does not distinguish what kind of work is to be done.
2. The word is used in Colossians 4:17, where it says, "*and say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry (diakonos) which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it ...*"
  - a. The word Ministry is "Diakonos," but we do not know what kind of ministry or service Archippus received, or was to fulfill. We don't know whether he was a deacon an elder a preacher or something else. The scripture doesn't tell us, so we have no way of knowing.
  - b. The word "Diakonos" is distinctive. We find the focus of those it refers to on loving action on behalf of a brother, sister or neighbor. These ministry words call us to look at our fellow human beings as objects of the loving services we extend to them for Jesus' sake.
3. Only the context (the surrounding writings) can determine the kind of work the deacon or minister is doing.
4. Note other usage's of the word:
  - a. Matthew 20:28 - Jesus did not come to be served, but to be serve.
  - b. Matthew 25:44 - Caring for those in prison.
  - c. Acts 6:2 - Serving tables.
  - d. Acts 6:4 - Teaching the Word of God.
  - e. II Corinthians 9:1 - Giving money.
  - f. I Corinthians 12:5; Ephesians 4:12 - Service to Christians.

## II. THE USE OF THE WORD IN PHILIPPIANS 1:1 AND TIMOTHY 3:8-13.

### A. READ Philippians 1:1

1. Why is the word translated "Deacon" in this passage when it would be correct to translate it as "servant" or "minister?"
2. The answer is that the words "servant" and "minister" are not distinctive as far as the one being spoken about to indicate that they are holding a distinct position within the organization of the church. The use of the word "diakonos" shows this distinction.

### B. READ I Timothy 3:8-13,

1. We see listed here the qualifications of those holding the position of "deacons" (Diakonos). From that fact we must come to the conclusion that these "diakonos" are a particular group of servants in the church (holding an office) or they would not need these special requirements.

### III. THE WORK OF DEACONS.

#### Introduction:

The work of deacons must be determined from the context of the scripture where the word "diakonos" is used. Again, it can be translated as, a servant, attendant, to serve, wait upon or minister, W.E. Vine. In Acts 6:2 it is rendered as "*serve*."

#### A. The use of the word in Acts 6:1-6, **READ**

At one point in the early days of the church the apostles were having too much work to do. To relieve them of the job of taking care of the needs of widows, seven men were appointed to do this job.

Seven men who met special qualifications were appointed for this job.

These men were called to "Serve" ("**diakonea**") the widows' tables. Because of this they could be called "DEACONS," or simply "ones that serve".

1. A deacons work, is doing a job that needs to be done. A deacon is always given a specific job to do. A deacon is someone who serves the church. If they are not serving the church they cannot be deacons.
2. In Acts 6:1-6 we see the following,
  - a. There was a job that needed to be done (V3)
  - b. Qualifications that had to be met, (V3) CF I Timothy 3:8-13
  - c. An appointment is to be made, (V3, 5-6) to fulfill the need of both the job and qualifications.

#### B. THE PURPOSE OF DEACONS

1. It seems from Acts 6 and the very meaning of the word "Diakonos" (servant), that the deacon's special work would be to relieve the church of any burden needing attention.
2. In this we can see that:
  - a. Deacons have an unlimited usefulness to the church
  - b. Good men, well qualified for their particular jobs should be selected and given authority to work in that particular area.
  - c. Those that are appointed to a job, should be allowed to do it or given the authority by the church to carry out the task, (delegation of authority).

### IV. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS, 1 TIMOTHY 3:8-10, 12-13.

#### INTRODUCTION:

Deacons are to be given specific jobs to do. They are special men chosen because the church believes that they can do those jobs. Before they can even be considered, they must be of

"good report" (Acts 6:3) and should prove themselves Christians for a period of time sufficient to know them and their capabilities. Paul says in I Timothy 3:10, "***They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.***" Paul says in I Timothy 5:22, "***Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands ...***" or appointing someone to an office of the church.

## A. QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS:

### 1. Qualifications of the man

- a. **Men of dignity** - (Greek - semnos - respectable, worthy, honorable, good character)  
The deacon should be a man who is honorable and respected by others. This type of man portrays a good character in his life. His life must be one that is worth imitating.
- b. **Not double tongued** - (Greek - dilogous - speaking with two voices, insincere)  
These men are not to say one thing to one person and something to another person. In other words, you can depend on what he says to be the same for everyone.
- c. **Not addicted to much wine** - (Greek - prosecho - addicted to wine, fond of wine).  
The deacon must not be a drunkard. It describes the character of a man who, even in his sober moments, acts with the outrageousness of a drunken man.
- d. **Not fond of sordid gain** ("not pursuing dishonest gain" NIV) - (Greek - aischrokerdos - with greediness for material gain) Deacons may be called upon to handle offerings and distribute money to needy people in the church. It may be tempting for some to use the funds in selfish ways. Deacons must have a spiritual attitude towards money that will allow them to use it properly.
- e. **Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience** - (Greek - echontas to musterion tes pistos en kathapa suneidesei - hold the mystery of faith in a clear conscience). Deacons must understand the doctrine of God and obey it in a good conscience. It is not good enough to sit in meetings or serve the church, they must base their decisions on the Word of God and back up their decisions with their godly life.
- f. **First be tested** - (Greek - dokimazo - proved, evidence, proved in character, tested).  
This implies watching their lives and seeing how they conduct themselves. It is worth noting that many men in the Old Testament were first tested as servants before they held a position of authority such as Moses, David, and even Jesus. Therefore, this testing is an examination of one's character and work in the ordinary work of the Church before he is to hold an office of a deacon.
- g. **Beyond Reproach** - (Greek - anegkletos - beyond reproach, without fault) The

word Paul uses here is the same word used in Titus referring to elder's meaning a man of excellent reputation among men, having honesty and integrity. This is used in a parallel scripture pertaining to elders meaning not having any bad thing to grab hold of in a persons life. Therefore, a deacon should have a pure life.

h. **Husbands of one wife** - ( Greek - gunaikos andra - one woman man, husband of one wife)

1) "The Greek literally means that he must be 'the husband of one wife.' Some take it to mean that the Christian leader must be a married man, and it is possible that the phrase could mean that.... Some few take it to mean that the Christian leader can not marry a second time, even after his wife's death...But in its context here we can be quite sure that the phrase means the Christian leader must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity."

i. **Good managers of their children** - (Greek - proistamenoι - manage, have authority over) (Greek - teknon - children) This refers to a man not only having control over his children, but, also having the ability to take care of them in every respect. He should have the ability to teach them, control them and care for them.

j. **Good managers of their households** - (Greek - idion oikon - one's home and one's house) The deacon should be able to maintain the control not only over his children, but over all those things pertaining to his house. His family (wife and children) should be taken care of and he should be able to take care of all the affairs of his house. If he can not, how will he be able to take care of the matters of the Church in which he is set aside to serve?

## 2. **Qualifications of his wife** -

a. Some have rendered this as it could be qualifications of a 'deaconess'. This is highly unlikely as the Greek language denotes a woman or wife in the terminology used (Greek - gunaikas - woman or wife). Since the Greek language is very specific in terminology, and the word deacon is used only in the masculine tense here, Paul would have used the term "deaconess" if women could hold such an office.

b. Some have taken this passage to mean that this is qualifications of another order of an office in the church. Many refer to Phoebe as being a "deaconess" in the Church at Cencheria, however, this word merely denotes that she was serving in the Church, it does not state that she held an office (Romans 16:1). Perhaps in some churches it was necessary for the wives of the deacons to help their mate, especially when it related to assisting other women in the work, in preparing for baptisms, or in fellowship times. We thank God for the service of women in the church. However, there is no solid evidence that they held an office in the Church. It is not necessary to hold an office to have a ministry or exercise a gift.

c. The qualities to be found in a deacon's wife are: ( I Timothy 3:11)

- 1) **Dignified** - (Greek - semnos - respectable, worthy, good character) The wife of a deacon must have similar qualities as her husband. She must be a woman whose character is worthy of imitation and seen by others as being respectable.
- 2) **Not malicious gossips** - (Greek - diabolos - given to malicious gossip, has a reference to the word Devil) The wife of a deacon must be one who is serious about the Church and not one given to slanderous talk like the Devil. They must not be given to giving false accusations against another person as well.
- 3) **Temperate** - (Greek - nephalios - sober, temperate) The wife of a deacon must also be serious about the Lord's work. This refers to her attitude in life contrasting with one who is drunken in their conduct.
- 4) **Faithful in all things** (V11) - (Greek - pistas en pasin - faithful in everything). Faithful from the Greek "Pistas," is literally one who is to be trusted or who is reliable. It is imperative that the wife of a deacon be faithful not only to the Lord, but to her husband and the local authorities. Any unfaithfulness could bring about something that one could grasp hold of and leave her husband unqualified for the work of a deacon.

## **CONCLUSION:**

A Congregation with good deacons who relieve the Pastors (elders), the Evangelists and the Teachers so that they can do their work, will help make a more spiritual church. This is because it will allow each person to do their own job in a better way.

Deacons however are not "junior elders". The New Testament says nothing about the deacons helping the elders in ruling the church or making their decisions. Although the elders must make use of those resources that they have at hand in aiding them to make decisions. This would include asking others their opinions and sharing the knowledge which others have.

Deacons are servants. Servants of God and of his church. They are given specific works to do and given the authority to do those works. This is God's plan and one that will work for us today if we use it.

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## Appendix:

# The Question

By Russ Lawson

**Question:** Must a church first have Elders before they can appoint Deacons or can Deacons be appointed by a church without Elders?

The definition of the word “Deacon” or “Diakonos” is found in the words translated as “a servant, helping and giving free service, without any particular description of the person or the work being done.” (W.E. Vine, Dictionary of New Testament Words - edited by R. Lawson).

The word translated into English as “Deacon,” “Minister” or “Servant” does not distinguish what kind of work is being done or any qualifications in and of itself. The work and the qualifications of the person must come from the context in which the word is used. In the case of “Deacons of the church” we must look at biblical example for those things. One thing we can readily see is that some work must be given for them to do.

The question of whether or not a “Deacon” can be appointed by a church without first having “Elders” must also be answered by looking at biblical example. First, we must understand that the deacons are servants of the church, not servants of the elders. They are not “junior elders” or “elder trainees”. Deacons are men who have met specific qualifications as given in God’s word. Deacons are men who can do or complete specific tasks for the benefit of God’s church or relieve the church of some burden.

### **What about the biblical example of the installation of men into the office of “Deacon”?**

The only biblical example we have concerning the actual mechanics is found in Acts 6. In this chapter we see a specific problem which needed to be addressed by the church. There were widows in the church who were not being cared for in the normal work of the church. The church realized that something needed to be done. Read what the apostles said concerning this problem: Acts 6:1-4 “*And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*” Biblical hermeneutic requires that we must ask, who was speaking and to whom were the words spoken. We see that the twelve apostles were speaking and they were speaking to, “*brethren*” or “the church”. The apostles told the “brethren” or “the church” to choose men to do the work of “*servings*”. The word translated as “*ministrations*” is the Greek word “diakonia”, meaning service or ministry. The word translated as “serve” in verse 2 is the word “diakoneo”. The word “*business*” verse 3 is the Greek word “chreia {khri'-ah}” which can be translated also as “duty” or “need”. This choosing of the men who were to do the work of a “deacon” or ful-

fill this office in the church, was given to the church to do without the involvement of elders.

Notice in verse 5 the church chose the men and in verse 6 the apostles gave their approval of and blessing to the selection of the men. Acts 6:6 ***“Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”*** In verse 3 the apostles said, ***“look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.”*** The Greek word translated as ***“appoint”*** is the word “kathistemi {kath-is'-tay-mee}”. It is defined by Strong as, “to set, place, put, to set one over a thing (in charge of it). Some might argue that this indicates that you must have a higher authority (such as apostles or elders) to approve or oversee the work of the deacons. This is not the concept being shown in this scripture. To say that the “apostles” are an example of or representation of “elders” is a speculation which we cannot make. To take the stand that there can be no deacons without first having elders would be going beyond what is written. Again let me state that the deacons are working for the church, not the elders. Is it possible to appoint qualified men to the office of deacon without elders already being in place within a church? Yes, I believe it is, but it is decision which each individual congregational must make based upon their understanding and needs. The bottom line is that a man cannot become a deacon without the approval of the church regardless of whether they have elders or not.

**Would this position put the deacons outside or above the authority of the elders if elders were appointed at a later date?** No it would not, the deacons do not have any authority in governing the spiritual matters of the church. They are given work to be done on behalf of the church. (And I might point out that they hold that position only as long as the work is there for them to do, deacons are not appointed for life!) The deacons must work with the elders, just as any other members of the church and are under the spiritual authority of the elders.