

Elders & Deacons

In **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9** we find the qualifications for one to serve as an elder. While Timothy & Titus had only the list sent to them, we have access to both lists, and therefore must consider all that the New Testament has to say on this and any other subject in order to properly interpret the Scriptures. In reading the qualifications, you will see that an elder must be a mature Christian, showing exemplary service in all areas of his life. The terms for this office include: elder, shepherd, pastor, overseer, bishop and presbyter.

Peter discusses something as to the work of an elder. **1 Peter 5:2-3** *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.”* Here Peter indicates that the elders are to provide oversight without being *“lords over God’s heritage”*. **Hebrews 13:17** gives another description, *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”* In these two passages we see both the work of the elders and the response of the congregation to the oversight by the elders.

The authority of an eldership is governed by the Scriptures. They are both limited by and authorized to carrying out the commands and precepts that come from God. The authority they have comes from God, Himself. Thus the main function of an eldership is to ensure that whatever is done by the congregation is in keeping with the Word of God. Other work includes settling disputes among brethren (Acts 15:1-2). Thus they are to be decision makers. Elders must lead with diligence (Romans 12:8). This means they are devoted to do the work. The elders watch for the souls of the flock. This involves feeding and protecting the church from false teachers (1 Peter 5:2; Titus 1:9). Elders are men of the Word & men of prayer (! Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; James 5:14-16).

The position of an Elder is not one to be taken lightly (James 3:1). There is a lot of weight that rests on their shoulders. They are to be peacemakers, decision makers, teachers, guides, prayerful ministers, and devoted servants of Christ.

Notice also that the Hebrew writer exhorts individual members to be in submission to the leadership by their elders, so that they may be able do their job with a heart of joy and not grief, indicating that the congregation must play a role of supporting the faithful execution of the duty of its overseers.

There is a thought among many today that the elders oversee the spiritual needs of the church while the deacons oversee the physical needs. This is not a biblical concept. The duty of the eldership is to provide oversight for the church both physically and spiritually. The role of a deacon is quite different.

The word “Deacon” means literally means *“moving so thoroughly as to kick up dust”*. A deacon is a worker. He is selected, based on the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 to serve as a special servant. We see the work of deacons first mentioned in Acts 6:1-7, when seven men were appointed to help needy widows. Though they are never called deacons, their work and qualifications appear to be the same. This is a man who has every aspect of his life under control. One can conclude that a deacon is expected to be a willing worker, dedicated to the work assigned.

Elders & Deacons are not perfect men, but they are dedicated men who meet God’s requirements, thus enabling them to serve as He directs.

Regardless of our individual roles, let us all be committed to working together to carry out God’s will and to bring glory to His name.