

# THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEACONS

Whereas the office of elder is often ignored in the modern church, the office of deacon is often misunderstood. Based on the New Testament, the role of the deacon is mainly to be a servant. The church needs deacons to provide logistical and material support so that the elders can focus on the Word of God and prayer.

The New Testament does not provide much information concerning the role of deacons. The requirements given in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 focus on the deacon's character and family life. There are, however, some clues as to the function of deacons when their requirements are compared with those of the elders. Although many of the qualifications are the same or very similar, there are some notable differences.

Perhaps the most noticeable distinction between elders and deacons is that deacons do not need to be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). Deacons are called to "hold" to the faith with a clear conscience, but they are not called to "teach" that faith (1 Tim. 3:9). This suggests that the deacons do not have an official teaching role in the church.

Like elders, deacons must manage their house and children well (1 Tim. 3:4, 12). But when referring to deacons, Paul omits the section where he compares managing one's household to taking care of God's church (1 Tim. 3:5). The reason for this omission is most likely due to the fact that deacons are not given a ruling or leading position in the church—that function belongs to the elders.

Although Paul indicates that a person must be tested before he can hold the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:10), the requirement that he cannot be a new convert is not included. Paul notes that if an elder is a recent convert "he may become puffed up with conceit" (1 Tim. 3:6). One implication concerning this distinction could be that those who hold the office of elder are more susceptible to pride because they possess leadership over the church. On the contrary, it is not as likely for a deacon, who is in more of a servant role, to fall into this same sin. Finally, the title "overseer" (1 Tim. 3:2) implies general oversight over the spiritual well-being of the congregation, whereas the title "deacon" implies one who has a service-oriented ministry.

Beyond what we glean from the differences in qualifications, the Bible does not clearly indicate the function of deacons. Yet based on the pattern established in Acts 6 with the apostles and the Seven, it seems best to view deacons as servants who do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church. Just as the apostles delegated administrative responsibilities to the Seven, so the elders are to delegate certain responsibilities to the deacons so that the elders can focus their efforts elsewhere. As a result, along with our denomination guide, our church sees the responsibilities and duties to include:

1. Care for the people
  - a. Through prayer, provision, protection and planning
2. Care for the property
  - a. Through planning, practicality, preparation and prevention
3. Care for the pastors
  - a. Through prayer, practicality & planning

**Facilities:** The deacons are responsible for managing the church property. This would include making sure the place of worship is prepared for the worship service, ensuring the facility is in great condition and safe for congregants

**Care and Benevolence:** Similar to what took place in Acts 6:1–6 with the daily distribution to the widows, the deacons should be involved in administrating funds or other assistance to the needy; which includes those in need of spiritual and emotional care. Spiritual care and visitation for our seniors, shut-ins should also be done

**Finances:** While the elders(pastors) oversee the financial business of the church (Acts 11:30), the deacons are to handle the day-to-day matters. This would include collecting and counting the offering, keeping records, and so on. It is however our preference to have Deacon-representation on our Executive and Finance Team

**Ushers:** The deacons could be responsible for greeting guests, seating the congregation, praying for our congregants or preparing the elements for communion.

**Logistics:** Deacons should be available to help in a variety of ways so that the elders are able to concentrate on teaching and shepherding the church.