



Church Leadership: Church Practices Series

INTRODUCTION	3
IDENTIFICATION OF BIBLICAL OFFICES.....	3
TERMINOLOGY FOR BIBLICAL OFFICES AND ASSOCIATE ITEMS	3
QUALIFICATIONS FOR BIBLICAL OFFICES.....	4
ELDER	6
<i>Moral Qualities.....</i>	6
<i>Leading Qualities.....</i>	7
<i>Teaching Qualities.....</i>	7
DEACON	8
<i>Moral Qualities.....</i>	8
<i>Leadership Qualities.....</i>	8
MEMBERSHIP	9
ROLES OF BIBLICAL OFFICES	9
ELDER	9
<i>Teaching - Protecting</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Leading</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Prayer</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Extent of Elder Rule.....</i>	<i>13</i>
DEACON	14
QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS AND DEACONS - EXPANDED	16
ELDERS.....	16
DEACONS	21
ELDER- DEACON SELECTION PROCESS	23
WARNINGS	23
REASONS FOR SERVING	23
SCRIPTURAL MODELS USEFUL FOR SELECTION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS.....	24
<i>Acts 1 Model</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Acts 6 Model</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Titus 1 Model</i>	<i>25</i>
SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES	26
SELECTION PROCESS	27
<i>Step 1 -- Congregation Inputs.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Step 2 -- Elder Review.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Step 3 -- Observation and Testing</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Step 4 -- Approval</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Removal of an Elder or Deacon.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Seasons of Inactivity</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Deacons Without Tasks.....</i>	<i>30</i>

Resignation of Elders or Deacons31

Church Leadership

Introduction

It is important for a congregation to understand what the Scriptures teach concerning the officers of the church that will lead and minister to the body. This lesson revolves around these Biblical offices, the qualifications for those that hold them, and their roles and responsibilities. This lesson will also outline the process that we will use for the selection of the office holders within this congregation. As with all of our “Church Practices” lessons this is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the topic, but one that is sufficient to establish our practices within this congregation. It is a given that this congregation holds to an Elder rule form of government. If there are questions concerning this subject please contact one of the Elders.

These are very serious positions of great responsibility. To take this subject lightly is to dishonor what God teaches us concerning His church. The souls of the congregation are being placed in the hands of these men and the Elders will give an account to God for their service. Deacons that serve well obtain a high standing and great confidence in the faith. It is not profitable for the souls of the congregation if the wrong men are placed in authority. Be in diligent prayer for God’s leading of the congregation and Elders every time we come to considering who should be brought forward to be leaders in the congregation.

Identification of Biblical Offices

Southside Bible Church holds that there are two Biblical offices established in Scripture concerning the oversight and ministry of the church. These are Elder and Deacon. These offices will be given additional description and justification in later sections. It will not be debated here, but Scripture is clear that Elders and Deacons are men. We have discussed the roles of men and women in previous sections. We also do not hold to the existence of office of Deaconess. This position will also not be discussed here. If there is confusion on these issues the congregation should address the Elders of the church for clarification.

Terminology for Biblical Offices and Associate Items

It is challenging to establish terms describing the leadership of the local church that are not misunderstood. The passage of time in languages, ignorance, and abuse of almost every term used in Scripture makes it difficult to be true to the word of God and at the same time understandable by the congregation. As we have looked at this topic, much discussion was given to how terms should be used. Deacon is a very simple and generally understood term, but the role of a deacon is not necessarily so easily discerned. Pastor, elder, bishop, presbyter, shepherd, etc. are all terms that have their roots in the original Greek and early English translations. We have attempted to match as closely as

possible terms used in the original languages, but are still meaningful for our day without causing additional confusion in our congregation. Below gives a simple set of terms that we will use in this congregation. There is also a brief discussion of other options we considered, so that the congregation can see that there are other terms that could be equally correct, but potentially more confusing. Deacon is not confusing in the name, but in the role. This topic will be discussed later in this section. The list below:

- Pastor or Elder – Biblical office, overseer of church may be paid or unpaid. The terms are used interchangeably. Typically we use Elder within the congregation and Pastor outside the congregation to avoid cultural confusion with those unfamiliar with the Biblical usage.
- Church Staff - All paid workers at the church. Not all Staff members are Pastors/Elders.
- Aspiring Leaders -- Those men under consideration/training for Elder or Deacon.

Other options that could be used are listed below, but were not selected to ensure both Biblical and cultural clarity. It is clear that the role of an Elder is to pastor or shepherd the church. We will see this later in this section. Thus, when one thinks of an Elder of this church we should equate those roles, qualities, and responsibilities with what we culturally think of as the “Pastor” of the church. Other options not chosen:

- Pastor is not used, only Elder, - too much confusion with Mormons,
- Elder is not used, only Pastor – not as clear with regards to the original language and understood uses today, though it does bring a cultural clarity to the importance of the office
- Bishop - Too much cultural baggage
- Overseer – Too vague and misunderstood in our culture, though Biblically correct
- Presbyterian – Too much cultural baggage
- Shepherd – Too vague and loosely associated with cult-like organizations

Qualifications for Biblical Offices

The passages below describe the qualifications of Elders and Deacons. The table below lays out these qualifications side by side.

- NAB 1 Timothy 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6 *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Deacons likewise *must*

be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 *but* holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women *must* likewise *be* dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Deacons must be husbands of *only* one wife, *and* good managers of *their* children and their own households. 13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

- NAB Titus 1:4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6 *namely*, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. 10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.

DEACON QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY	ELDER QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY
1. Dignity	
2. Not double-tongued	
3. Not addicted to much wine	1. Not addicted to wine
4. Not fond of sordid gain	2. Free from the love of money, not fond of sordid gain
5. Hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience	
6. Beyond reproach	3. Beyond reproach
7. A wife of character (1 Tim 3:11)	
8. Husband of one wife	4. Husband of one wife
9. Good manager of his children and his own household	5. Manages his household well, keeping children under control with all dignity
10. First must be tested and proven to be above reproach	6. Temperate
	7. Prudent
	8. Respectable
	9. Hospitable
	10. Able to teach

	11. Not pugnacious
	12. Gentle
	13. Uncontentious
	14. Not a new convert
	15. Has a good reputation with those outside the church
	16. Not self-willed
	17. Not quick tempered
	18. Lover of what is good
	19. Just
	20. Devout
	21. Self-controlled
	22. Children who are not accused of dissipation or rebellion
	23. Having children who believe
	24. Holds fast to the faithful Word – able to both exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict

Elder

As one can see, the list of qualifications for an Elder is extensive. Though the offices of Elder and Deacon have similar qualities when taken together, Paul gives much more attention to the details that must be examined concerning the Elder. It is clear that the weight of responsibilities that are given to the Elder necessitates extreme caution to avoid appointing of an unqualified man. If we break down these qualifications into a few categories for purposes of ease of study we can see that they could be viewed under the headings of moral qualities, leading qualities, and teaching qualities.

Moral Qualities

The list of moral qualities is the most extensive by far and covers almost every area of life from his view of money, power, self-control, ability to deal with difficulties, ability to deal with people, his maturity in the faith, and his affections. An Elder must be one that demonstrates care for the congregation in that he is approachable, hospitable, and involved enough with the church to be well known. An Elder can not know everyone, and will often form closer relationships with some than with others, but he must be a man that demonstrates care and consideration for those under his care. It is often a question as to what the term “husband of one wife” means. In short this means the man has his eyes only on his wife and is not in a marriage that is adulterous. There are conditions that divorce is granted with no dishonor, but these cases are few and far between. When these cases present themselves the Elders will deal with each situation on its unique merits. If there are questions concerning this issue please contact the Elders. It is clear that an

Elder can be trusted in what he says, can control himself, and is able to justly make judgements. He must be able to serve God and not for power, fame, money, or any earthly reward. His heart, mind, and soul are focused on the flock of God under his care. As the title implies, the more spiritually mature the more development of these qualities the man will exhibit. This does not imply that a young man cannot serve, but life teaches and Paul reinforces that a man young in the faith is not to be considered as an Elder. We know that young men served in such positions (e.g. Timothy), but every characteristic describing an Elder calls-out “pick a mature man, not a novice,” regardless of his age. “Gray hair does not an Elder make.” It is impossible in this short space to review all these qualities, but it is important to note that Paul sums up this man by stating that he is to be “above reproach” both inside and outside the church. Is this man is one that could say with Paul (though with great reverence and humility) “follow my example.” If he is genuinely a “servant of God,” the church should joyfully follow such a man. A true Elder is a rare man.

Leading Qualities

The qualities that distinguish a man as a leader are hard to define, but easy to see in their fruits. Paul gives us several fruits that we can see to aid in determining if a man can lead a church as an Elder. If these fruits are seriously flawed the congregation will suffer just as badly if not more so than his family, children, and those he associates with outside of the church. If his family is not well managed, not just under control, the man will never be able manage the church. It is interesting to notice that when Paul speaks concerning the way an Elder manages his children, he does not leave it at the fact the children are under control, but that they are handled with all dignity. This is not a man that brings order by threats, bullying, or in an irrational manner. He is one that accomplishes the management of his household with all dignity. This same level of dignity should be indicative of an Elder in the church. Beware of the man that does not have self-control. Violent swings of mood and behavior are not indicative of a man of self-control, but one of a man that is controlled by his emotions and thus prone to irrational judgement. This does not show dignity or the qualities that demonstrate good leadership.

Teaching Qualities

It is clear that an Elder must be able to teach. The original language also indicates that this is a desire that he has continually. An Elder can not be “once a teacher” and now “a ruler.” The teaching of an Elder is also strongly associated with the ability to both exhort those under his care, and also to be able to refute those in opposition. It is often the case that there are many that can exhort, but few are willing to refute because it often brings about negative consequences. An Elder must be a man that can teach in good times and stand even when there is opposition. The manner of rebuke to the one that is opposition can not be harsh, but it must also exhibit the characteristics that accompany the moral qualities of an Elder. There is not a double standard that allows an Elder to violate the moral qualities just because there is an error to refute. Prudence and gentleness ought to

accompany the rebuke, along with “all instruction.” An Elder practices what he teaches, or else he is not an Elder.

Deacon

Though Paul does not give as extensive of a list of qualifications concerning a Deacon, it is clear that this man very much resembles an Elder in moral and leadership qualities. If you try and sum up a Deacon in a practical way he would be a man that you could trust with any task or responsibility outside of leading the entire congregation and teaching it. He can be trusted with money, representing the church inside or outside to others, living godly before the world, and being above reproach. This is a truly high calling. It is also interesting to note that the quality of his wife must also be of extremely high standard. Though the wife of an Elder ought to be a woman that should be highly respected (and will be carefully examined), Paul specifically introduces the qualities of the Deacon’s wife into the mix. This is primarily understood to be due to the fact that unlike the Elder’s wife, the Deacon’s wife will be more closely involved with the duties of her husband. The Elder’s roles are associated with teaching, protection, prayer, and leading. These tasks are not the roles of a woman.

Moral Qualities

When we look at the qualities the Paul describes concerning a Deacon, it is clear that the standards are high and oriented toward service in a manner that engenders trust in the congregation and Elders. Paul starts with a call to dignity. This is similar to the Elder. This is not a man that you consider a “rowdy” man. He also shows by his words, general behavior, and attitude toward money, that he is a trustworthy man. The congregation is not going to question what he says, worry that he will behave under the influence of a controlling element outside of the Holy Spirit, nor be concerned that he will be seeking profit above the glory of God. He is above reproach. He is one that can be clear in his own conscience that he is walking in a worthy manner. This would require him to always be measuring his behavior by the Bible and turning from sin. He is not one that is worried that he will be found out in his sin. It is clear that he has a wife that can be trusted in her word, behavior, and is dignified. She is faithful in all things. Though she is not in a position of authority she will very often be close to the works of her husband and will by this fact see and hear things that might be of very sensitive nature. Her integrity must be nearly equal to her husband’s else she can bring reproach to her husband’s ministry. The Deacon is surely a man to be respected, followed, and emulated.

Leadership Qualities

The qualities that make a Deacon able to carryout his responsibilities include the ability to manage things well. The test of this is his home. His wife, children, and home life will demonstrate whether these qualities exist in the man. Just as with an Elder, it is important to watch his family and how he manages it. A man with a poorly managed family will equally mismanage whatever he is placed over in the church. It might not

show quickly, but by the time it does we would have a mess on our hands. If a man is to be “put in charge” over an important ministry of the church he must be someone that both can lead and one that will be followed. Because a man is a “nice guy” does not mean that he can lead or will be followed. There are many places in the body a “nice guy” can serve very effectively, but a Deacon must manage things well. He will be placed in charge over areas and, for the very reason that they require careful oversight, he will have the authority that is given him by the Elders. The congregation should follow his direction in that area as if an Elder was giving the direction. Remember, an Elder will not have significant time to always be “watching and reviewing” everything a Deacon does. The Elders have their own very critical and time-consuming duties. This is why such servants came into being in the early days of the church (Acts 6). With this in mind it is even more important to understand that this man must work well with the people and be able to lead and will be followed.

Membership

Though a non-Biblical requirement, the prudence of requiring an Elder or Deacon to be a member of the local church provides for protection and encouragement of the congregation. Though this topic is covered under the church by-laws, a brief discussion is warranted here to help understand why this added requirement has been imposed to the Biblical qualifications for an Elder or Deacon at this church. It is clear that in an Elder rule church membership only provides for our legal protection or aid in ordering the congregation. As part of this legal protection and ordering of the congregation it is wise to require the Elders and Deacons to be members of the church. Aspiring leaders are not required to meet this requirement, but it is incumbent on these men to understand that until they have met this requirement that they can not be considered for Elder or Deacon. Being a member gives the congregation the understanding that this man is here to stay and serve. Since the membership requirements are very basic and are used mainly for avoiding confusion in church procedure it is not seen as anything that would be outside of Biblical requirements for a man to serve in a leadership position.

Roles of Biblical Offices

Elder

The principle roles of an Elder are to protect the church, teach the church, and lead the church. These duties include teaching, preaching, rebuking, prayer, counseling, Biblical oversight of the congregation (a separate section discusses this issue), and direction of church affairs directly or via those under the authority of the Elders. The Elders ought not to be overly involved in the daily mechanics of the church. Not that they will be blind or detached, but that they should be spending the majority of their time oriented toward teaching, prayer, and oversight. An Elder copying the bulletin or mowing the grass is not greatly profitable for the souls of the congregation. Elders, by the very qualities demanded of them, will be involved in serving the congregation, but profit is to be found in their primary roles. If they fail to serve or be involved with the congregation

under the guise of being too busy praying, teaching, or overseeing, they have lost sight of what made them qualified for the position in the first place. The following passages give us great insight into what an Elder is to do.

Teaching - Protecting

It is clear that the Elders are the principle authoritative teachers in church. To accomplish this task much time must be given to preparation. The apostles understood this clearly and protected this time, even at the expense of other important things. If the teaching is poor, the equipping of the saints will fall short for the works of service. God will not be glorified. A true teacher understands that this ability is given from God. It is a gift. Many men know a great deal concerning the Scripture and live it, but God has not gifted them in the area of teaching and rebuking. It is the sovereign hand of God that gives the gift of teaching. Men should always strive to be able to communicate the Word of God more clearly, but a true teacher is one gifted by God. It is also clear that from the ability to teach comes an often difficult and unpleasant task, which is rebuking those in error. A congregation must be protected from false teachers and teachings. This is a very critical role of an Elder. If the Elder can not refute those in error, the congregation becomes at risk to drift toward heresy. The purity of God's word and its careful handling is entrusted to the Elders. When harm comes in whatever form, it is imperative that the Elders stand and confront the error. It is not enough just be able to teach and refute, but an Elder must be able to teach or refute error effectively. As previously mentioned the Elder must not be a tyrant or quick tempered or lacking in self-control when teaching or when a rebuke is necessary. Gentleness, justice, and prudence are the mark of a man that can refute error in a manner pleasing to God. It is also clear that Elders must watch over other Elders. Paul warned that even those that have been screened and tested might in the end turn out to be wolves. We know that Satan disguises his messengers as servants of righteousness. The Elders must be on watch even among themselves. This is why it is shown that there should be a plurality of Elders. Any single man, unchecked, is prone to fall into error, even if he believes that he is striving for God's kingdom and the welfare of the congregation.

- NAB Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. 26 "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. 28 "**Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers, to shepherd the church of God** which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my

departure **savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.** 31 **"Therefore be on the alert,** remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. 32 **"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

- NAB Acts 15:6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. (Doctrinal matter)
- NAB 1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Leading

It is clear that it is the Elders of the church that have the responsibility to lead the church. This is not dictatorial leading or one that is to be aloof. It is critical that the congregation is listened to and areas of confusion, need, or problems addressed just as was modeled by the apostles. This being said, it is the responsibility of Elders to lead and shepherd the congregation. It is also clear that the oversight is to be done not under compulsion, but voluntarily and eagerly, and not for personal gain. The Elders based on knowledge of where the people are at spiritually must establish the direction of a congregation. Paul always addressed the people where they were in their walk. Sometimes it was for exhortation or teaching, sometimes for rebuke or correction, but it was always for edification. Each church has its own particular character and needs. This church is no different. The Elders must discern where to go and what to do so that the people are gently and humbly lead, trained and equipped, and edified. Pray for wisdom for the Elders for they are held accountable by God to give an account for the souls that have been placed in their care. This includes your soul. Consider for a moment the weight of sobriety that leading a congregation brings to these men.

The oversight of the church at large is challenging enough, but consider the individual souls that the Elders must know well enough to help guide them. This task is typically called "pastoral oversight." A separate lesson will be dedicated to the full expansion of this topic, but a brief summary as to how it shall be practiced at this church is as follows. Oversight will be through getting to know the people personally, through inputs or observations given by those that might have an encouragement or concern, and by personal observation. It is not the intention of the Elders to pry into a life, but if an issue does come to their knowledge it must be followed up in a loving manner. It is important to remember that God has given the Elders to train and equip the congregation and the husband to oversee his family on a daily basis. The Elders believe that this is where oversight should begin. As mentioned in the lesson on the roles of men, the men have a

great responsibility to train their own home and deal with problems. The Elders will step in when it becomes apparent that this has failed or needs attention.

- NAB 1 Peter 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;
- NAB 1 Thessalonians 5:12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.
- NAB Acts 11:30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.
- NAB Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Prayer

The apostles dedicated much time to prayer. They understood that leading a congregation must be done in the strength of and by the wisdom of God. When a man relies on his own judgement, error will come and souls will suffer. An Elder must be a man that comes before God in prayer. No specific requirement of when or with whom an Elder must pray is given, just that like all believers that it is done not for show, but from a heart of faith. It will be evident when a man strives in his own strength by the fruit of his ministry. An Elder's heart will be for the people in his care and will pour this into his prayer life.

- NAB Acts 1:13 When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. 14 These all with **one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
- NAB Acts 6:5 The 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.

Extent of Elder Rule

The Church is Elder ruled

- With humility
- With authority
- With joy

It is clear that as a church grows in size and as is already evident with the geographic distribution of this congregation Elders can not know everything or everybody. It is also clear that they must focus on their primary tasks and not be greatly involved in the day to day operations of the ministries of the church. There is also need for constant input from many sources to ensure that the Elders keep a clear understanding of the needs of the congregation. The Deacons and aspiring leaders are a natural source of this input. Other ministry leaders are also a great source of input as to how things are running and if any needs are not being addressed. We have established an Administration Ministry for those that are gifted in planning, organizing, and communicating. This ministry will be heavily used in the exchange of information with the congregation. Meetings to provide insight into where the Elders see the direction of the church going, presentations on major activities, budgets, etc. will all be used to keep close communication with the congregation. It is also very important that individuals bring needs or issues to the Elders if they are not being addressed through the established ministries of the church.

Since the rule is overseen and decisions are under the authority of the Elders, it is not the congregation that will make the final decision on church issues. But this being said it is clear that if the Elders never listen to the congregation or solicit inputs they would be poor shepherds indeed. Shepherds would never plug their ears or blindfold themselves if they were watching over a flock. The Lord was always listening to the needs of his disciples and gently leading them. A shepherd that does not listen will not lead the flock well. There are times that it is important to hear the united voice of the congregation, but voting, affirmation, or confirmation of an action taken by the Elders is granted as a courtesy only. This again means that they and the congregation must bathe the decisions that the Elders make in prayer. These are men that must be trustworthy, not those that are always called into question. If this were the case, the grief that would be brought to them would not allow them to serve with joy. This condition is not profitable to the congregation (Hebrews 13:17).

Since money is a very sensitive subject, the Elders have taken great efforts to stay away from the daily management of church funds. Though it is clear from Scripture that the Elders were the ones that funds were given to so that they may put them to work in the congregation (see Acts 11:30), we want to ensure additional separation from the handling of funds. The Elders will approve budgets (generally prepared by others in the congregation), funding expenditures and/or delegate certain amounts to ministries, but they will not be looking at any individual giving records. The only time individual records will be reviewed (not by the Elders) is for tax purposes (required by law) and during times when the church might establish another body from members of this

congregation. At that time it would be necessary to know the total estimate of giving to help establish an initial church budget based on the individuals joining that new fellowship.

Deacon

It is evident that there are no specified tasks given in Scripture to the Deacon. It is generally accepted that the Deacon's roles are more oriented toward service in the congregation in tasks that are not associated with teaching or leading. This is implied in the original language from which the name Deacon is derived. This word meant to be a "table waiter" or "servant." These are not church "flunkies" however. They are men of exceptional quality. Deacons have authority and might even be teachers (but not in the authoritative sense of an Elder). The following outlines how the Elders of this congregation view the roles of Deacons and the principles applied in tasking a Deacon.

The role of Deacon grew out of a recognized need of the congregation that was brought to the attention of the Elders. (Acts 6 is seen as the genesis of the Deacon and was the model used in the church as the Deacon was established in all the churches). The task was of such a magnitude that it needed the attention of the Elders, but such a task would have significantly taken away from the primary tasks of the Elders. Thus the first men having the spiritual qualities as those found in a Deacon were identified by the congregation, reviewed by and prayed for by the Elders, and then given the authority to perform a specific task by the Elders. From this process we can see several principles that we will use. They are as follows:

- Deacons are necessary based on a need that is recognized by the congregation and Elders. This might mean that there are no Deacons, or there might be a need for many. Jobs for Deacons are not manufactured just because godly men exist in the congregation. The men brought forward were already serving and well known before they were given the specific task and authority.
- Deacons, like Elders, are men that are recognized by the congregation. They must be those that are already seen as servants. They are not just nice guys or wealthy people that make a good impression on the congregation. They are recognized servants.
- The authority of the Deacon is limited to the sphere of tasking given by the Elders. They do not become a second set of authority in the church. They have very specific tasks and have the authority to carry out these tasks. The Elders can afford only a small amount of time to oversee these men. They must be trustworthy.
- The types of tasks given Deacons are those that are of such concern to the congregation and Elders and would normally require the trust and maturity expected of an Elder (outside of teaching, protecting, and leading the congregation). The task must be of such a nature that it is **currently** (or very shortly will be) a concern. Some tasks when very small and have limited impacts on funds, resources, etc. may not need a Deacon to oversee them, but

when they grow they become a concern to all. The Deacon would then be needed to oversee the task.

- The tasks that the Deacon takes on will need him to be able to both manage and serve in bringing the task to fruition. This does not mean that he does not have help, but it is his responsibility. He is responsible for successful implementation.
- Deacons are to work with the Elders and not separately. Though not found specifically in Acts, Paul addresses the Philippian church and the “overseers and deacons.” It is clear that what they do is important to the proper functioning of the church and thus ought to be working closely with the Elders. In his service, the Deacon will come in contact with many of the congregation that might have needs. He will be able to communicate this with the Elders if he works with them. This does not make him a pseudo-elder, but a fellow servant with important insights and maturity.

To sum up how a Deacon will be designated and what he will do, we will ask these questions:

1. Is this a matter that is currently (or shortly will be) a concern for the congregation and Elders?
2. Does this task require the maturity and trust that would generally be associated with an Elder?
3. What are the boundaries, responsibilities, and authority of the task that is to be given to the Deacon?
4. Do we have such a man already identified or do we have to go through a selection process?

Qualifications of Elders and Deacons - Expanded

This section expands the qualifications of Deacons and Elders by taking each characteristic and provides an expanded definition from the original Greek. In many cases the original language and our modern meaning is the same. It is also evident that character qualities are difficult to define with perfect accuracy, but are easy to see when lived out. It is important for us to remember that “perfection” in all areas is not possible, but that the overall life of the man exhibits the quality as a general rule. It is also understood that some specific terms may extend to other related areas by principle, and the association of the quality is clarified when understood in terms of the responsibilities of the office. The following are the expansion of the qualities required by Elders, followed by those for Deacons.

Elders

1. **Not addicted to wine** - (paroinos – given to wine, drunken) -- This word, though sometimes debated, describes a man that is given to excessive drinking and drunkenness. This man can not control his drinking. This would certainly disqualify a man from the office of Elder or Deacon. There is no command against drinking, only drunkenness. Though we would hope that any man that aspires to leadership would not partake of alcohol at all because of its great danger and poor witness in our culture, it is permissible to drink. Because of the cultural association with drinking, if a man does drink he should use great wisdom and avoid public drinking. Though not from Scripture, it is evident from writings of the first century, the “wine” that was used during those times was watered down in ratios from 20:1 to 3:1. What we consider wine today is at least three times stronger than what would have been considered every day wine in those days. What we consider wine or beer today would be considered “strong drink” in the first century. Drinking is lawful, but is it profitable or edifying?
2. **Free from the love of money, not fond of sordid gain** - [me (strict denial) aischrokerdes – not given to greed for money or earthly gain] -- This man is not in leadership for the love of money, power, or prestige. He is serving for the love of the Lord and for no other reason.
3. **Beyond reproach** – (anepileptos – blameless, unrebukeable; not apprehended, something that can not be laid hold of, - 2) someone or something that can not be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable:) -- The basic understanding of this word is that no one can not bring a charge against the man in any area of his life. He is not perfect, but you can not realistically question the integrity of his Christian walk.
4. **Husband of one wife** – (aner mia gune - man/husband of one/only one woman/wife) -- Since the Greek does not provide explicit definition for the complete understanding, we are left to understand this passage through the rest of the

Scriptures. It is to be noted that the definition was one that was sufficient for the church of the first century and should be for all believers for all times. The simple answer is that this man must be a man that is faithful to his wife, and can not be charged that he has been unfaithful. The Scriptures do speak to times and circumstances where a divorce can occur without dishonor (in the case of the death of a spouse, also see 1 Corinthians 7), but this is not the norm. This man must exhibit the qualities of faithfulness in all aspects of his marriage. Remember it is a simple task getting married, it is much harder being faithful to that woman in all areas of the marriage. Marriage is not just a ceremony and wedding night. It is a life long commitment. If the circumstance arises concerning a man that has been previously married, the Elders will provide the extensive review necessary to see if the man meets this specific qualification. It is experientially demonstrated that if a man has problems in marriage, there are more often than not, other areas of his life that will disqualify him long before the issue of marriage.

5. **Manages his household well, keeping children under control with all dignity** – (proistemi & hupotage & semnotes - rule/maintain/to be over, to superintend, preside over, protector or guardian, to care for, to give attention to & the act of subjecting, obedience, subjection & the characteristic of a thing or person which entitles to reverence and respect, dignity, majesty, sanctity/ honor, purity) -- The picture that is painted here is a man that is in control of his household, paying attention to the household, guarding and protecting it. He is there. It is not his wife that leads the home while he is constantly absent. His children are under his control and his authority being shown by the way that they submit to his leading and guiding. They are not in rebellion to his authority. In modern terms there is no “well they are just being, children/teenagers, etc.” They are not rebels to his leading. He maintains this rule and caring of his home and children in a manner that is worthy of respect, reverence, or dignity. This is a man that anyone would want to follow as an example in how his family is lead, how it reacts to his leadership, and how he maintains it. This is not the picture of a tyrannical father or husband that keeps everything perfect in “church” and the rest of the time his family is in great turmoil. This family sails along with minor periods of turmoil. No family is without some difficulties, but his family is one that has no rebellion.
6. **Temperate** - (nephaleos – sober, temperate, abstaining from wine, either entirely or at least from its immoderate use, free from the control of wine) -- This term is related to how a man controls himself. It is associated with drinking, but understood to being a man in control, not being controlled. It is used in two other passages, one dealing with wives of Deacons and the other concerning how older men are to act. It demonstrates that this term sees the man being in control, not being controlled. Food, drink, drugs, or any other earthly thing does not control him. He can restrain himself.
7. **Prudent** – (sophron – sober, temperate, discreet; of sound mind, sane, in one’s senses, curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled) -- This word reinforces

that this man is in control. He has the abilities to be sound in his thinking and possess the wisdom necessary to handle difficult matters. He will not “fly off the handle” when faced with strife, insult, or contention. He does not over react to the situation, but maintains sound thinking and reacts accordingly. He is thoughtful in his ways.

8. **Respectable** – (kosmos – modest, of good behavior, well arranged, seemly) -- This word demonstrates that this man is not given to being a “show off.” He is modest in his behavior and is orderly in his life. He is not a man of chaos or indiscretion. It is the same word used to describe the garments of godly women.
9. **Hospitable** – (philoxenos – given to hospitality, lover of hospitality, generous to guests) -- This man is not given to being aloof. He loves to be with the people of God. He enjoys being with people in general. This does not mean he is a man giving to “partying,” nor does it mean that he must have everyone in the congregation to his home. It does mean that he desires to associate with others. It is understood that time, funds, and facilities limit his ability to be hospitable, but he will be a man that will desire to “have you over to his house” as he is able. This will be a joy to him. It is his practice to have people in his home and entertain them with a generous heart.
10. **Able to teach** - (didaktikos – apt and skillful in teaching) -- He is a man that is gifted in teaching. He is gifted by God and will do what it takes to accurately communicate it to the saints. This not a man that begrudgingly teaches. He is prone to teaching, as it is what God has given him to do, even if he is not qualified in other areas. He is a teacher given to the church by God. This does not mean that he requires special schooling (though it often helps), but that he is a man that knows how to communicate the things of God to His people.
11. **Not pugnacious** – (plektes – bruiser, ready for a blow, pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person) -- This man is not looking for a fight. He is not aggressive towards others. This is not a word that limits itself to just physical fighting. Too many men with great knowledge go out and use this knowledge to beat people up or intimidate them. In his home, with the saints of the church, and with those outside the church he is not a fighter. Some men just want to create arguments; this is not the man that should lead a congregation. Though it is true that an Elder must be able to rebuke, he is not to be pugnacious when he does it.
12. **Gentle** – (epieikes – gentle, patient, moderation, seemingly, suitable, equitable, fair, mild) -- This man is gentle. Picture a tiger with all of its power gently picking up its cub in its powerful jaws placing it out of harms way. This is what a gentle man looks like. He is not the tiger that clamps down on its cub and harms it, even if it is protecting it. A kind and gentle spirit controls the man’s power.
13. **Uncontentious** – (amachos – not a brawler, not to be withstood, invincible, not contentious, abstaining from fighting) -- Paul reiterates the need for a man not to be combative in his personality. He must understand that he can be wrong and can not

force own his way. He is not one that is drawn to strife. He is a peacemaker, not a war fighter.

14. **Not a new convert** – [me (strict denial) neophutos – newly planted, a new convert, neophyte] -- It is clear that an Elder must be one that is mature in the faith. Though many new believers have great zeal, acquire much knowledge, and are faithful in many ways, Paul warns us against selecting an unseasoned man. Perseverance will be more telling than zeal. New believers have too many areas to be learning and growing to be effective leaders. Paul knows that the honor, power, and responsibility of being an Elder will bring a new believer to conceit and ruin.
15. **Has a good reputation with those outside the church** – (kalos marturia – a good testimony, witness, record, report) -- This man can not just have a good reputation within the church, but must be able to have this same reputation outside of the church. This is where he spends most of his time. It is easy to look good for a few hours, but it is something else to live before the world every day in a godly manner. Even if the world does not like what he stands for, they will certainly see his godly character.
16. **Not self-willed** – (authades – self-willed, self-pleasing, arrogant) -- This man must not be only thinking of his wants. He must understand that he needs input from others. His opinions or feelings are not the central focus of his work, but it is of those in his care. Just because the shepherd does not “need a drink of water,” does not mean that the sheep are not thirsty. Just as the shepherd in the field must listen to the sheep to see and hear their needs, the shepherd in the church must listen to the needs of those in his care. Any shepherd would be arrogant to only think of himself.
17. **Not quick tempered** – [me (strict denial) orgilos – not quick to anger, not prone to anger, or being irascible] -- This man must hold his temper, even when provoked. This man must be pushed very far before his anger rises. This does not mean that he has no anger. There is a time and place for anger, but it must be proper anger, and not one that comes quickly.
18. **Lover of what is good** – (philagathos – lover of good men, loving goodness) -- This man will be one that seeks good men and good things. He will not be chasing after those that are disobedient to be his companions. He will not be chasing after things that are not profitable to his soul. This does not mean that he can not have times of recreation, but only that he will be typified by pursuing good things and walking with good men.
19. **Just** – (dikaios – righteous, just, right, observing divine laws, keeping the commands of God, innocent, guiltless, approved, acceptable before God, rendering what is due in a judicial sense, able to pass judgement on others) -- This man can be seen both to be a keeper of God’s commands, and also one that is able to make sound judgements concerning important matters in the congregation, especially as it relates to sinful

behavior. He is a man that can render godly decisions without respect to persons. He can be an effective judge within the congregation.

20. **Devout** – (hosios – holy, undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure, holy, pious) -- This man walks in a manner that demonstrates the holiness of our God. He is not one that is wicked. He renders to God what He is due. This does not mean that if he is not at every church related activity he is not devout. His life demonstrates his affections for God and the things of God.
21. **Self-controlled** – (egkrates – temperate, strong, robust, having power over, mastering, controlling, curbing, restraining, continent) -- This man is master of his life. He is not controlled by anything aside from his Lord and Savior. He has strength in the control of his life. He can restrain himself. He is not perfect, but his life demonstrates this mastery of godly living.
22. **Children are not accused of dissipation or rebellion** – [me (strict denial) asotia & anupotaktos – not an excessive life, or riotous, not abandoned or dissolute life & unruly, disobedient, not made subject to authority, will not submit, refractory] -- This man's children cannot be ones that are known to be unruly and will not subject themselves to authority. They cannot be ones that live "their way" in disobedience to those in authority or to the Scriptures. This is applicable to both church and all earthly authorities. Naturally, this does not imply that children must be perfect or never have short term issues, but rather as the text states as those who can't be *accused* by those around them as being *characterized* by such behavior. The general boundaries and types of activities that the Scriptures characterize in the term for dissipation are found in 1 Peter 4:3-4 and Ephesians 5:18.

^{NAU} **1 Peter 4:3** For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. **4** In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*.

^{NAU} **Ephesians 5:18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,
23. **Having children who believe** – (pistos teknon – faithful children – of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, execution of commands, or the discharge of official duties, can be relied upon, who trust in God's promises, one who is convinced that Jesus has been raised from the dead and He is Lord and Savior) -- This man has faithful children. They can be trusted to obey and follow instructions. They are on the path toward salvation. Some may very well be believers. We do not see the qualification of having "faithful children" as meaning that they are all believers. The Greek provides several meanings that are oriented

towards faithfulness, but not necessarily requiring belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior. We believe that the understanding of the children being faithful in their conduct is a more accurate understanding of this passage. It is indicative of the quality of the children that this man is raising. It parallels the fact that they are under control. They are children that bring respect, honor and dignity to the man. It is always hoped that all these children will become believers, but we understand that this is ultimately in the hands of God. These are children that are faithful to the man, his wife and to those in the congregation.

24. **Holds fast to the faithful Word – able to both exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict** – (parakaleo & elegcho & antilego, beseech, comfort, exhort, intreat, to instruct and encourage, to admonish, to console and strengthen & to refute, convict, to bring conviction to light, find fault, to show fault, chasten & speak against, deny, contradict, declined to obey, to refuse) -- This man must first accurately know the Scriptures well and be able to handle them well before he can exhort or refute. He must be able to come along side those that need teaching and encouragement or exhortation. He must also be one that can turn aside those that are in error or rebellion. Many men can teach when things are going well, but there are few that can teach or refute when difficult challenges come. This is a very gifted and mature man when it comes to handling the Word of God

Deacons

1. **Dignity** – (semnos – grave, honest, august, venerable, reverend) -- This man must show a quality that is not frivolous, but one that is to be respected and honored. He does not act like a child, but is one that is serious in his manner. He can be humorous, but not in a course manner. Laughter does not disqualify a man from being dignified. A cheerful heart and dignity can go hand in hand.
2. **Not double-tongued** – [me (strict denial) dilogos, doubletongued, not saying one thing to one person and another to someone else (with intent to deceive)] -- This man is basically not one that lies or tries to deceive. His word is his bond. It is a great temptation for any man to bend things just a little to avoid conflict. This man does not do so even when adversity is at hand. He can be trusted not to mislead people with what he says or does not say.
3. **Not addicted to much wine** – (me prosecho polus oinos, (strict denial) & beware, give heed to, to bring near, pay attention to & many, much, large & wine) -- This man does not pay attention or give heed to much drinking. He is not controlled by wine or any other substance. Though the word choice is slightly different, Paul gives the Deacon the same instruction as the Elder. Avoid being controlled by wine or any other substance. The same positions and admonitions are given to Deacons as Elders (see the discussion under Elders).
4. **Not fond of sordid gain** – see discussion under Elders, the same terms are used.

5. **Hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience** – (The Greek terms are translated very accurately here) -- This man knows what the Scriptures teach and his own conscience can not convict him of living in an inconsistent manner. This does not mean that he does not sin, but that the practice of his life gives him a clear conscience to serve without hypocrisy.
6. **Beyond reproach** – [dokimazo – prove, try, approve, discern, examine, (associated with determining whether a thing is genuine or not, often in respect to metals)] -- This man has been proven to be genuine. He has been tested, watched over, and found without fault. This examination is one of the life of the man, not just the knowledge of the man.
7. **A wife of character** (1 Timothy 3:11) – (semnos & me diabolos & nephaleos & pistos – grave, honest, venerable, reverend & not prone to slanderous or false accusers & sober, vigilant, temperate, abstaining from or limited in drinking & faithful, trustworthy, can be relied upon) -- This passage is one of the most difficult to handle and has been used to prove many things. As far as this congregation, it is seen as related to the wife of a Deacon and her qualities. Though the wife of an Elder is to be a godly woman and will be reviewed along with her husband, she is not as involved with the ministry of her husband as that of a Deacon's wife. Since the office is one that is oriented toward serving (not leading, teaching, and protecting), the wife of a Deacon may very well have closer involvement with what her husband is doing and must be an exceptional woman. We have already seen all of the words used in other sections of this lesson except for “me diabolos” – not malicious gossips. This term means that she is not a slanderer. In other words she can hold her tongue and not bring about false accusations either intentionally or through gossip. She will very likely hear things that could be used to cause great controversy in the congregation. She is a woman that can be greatly respected, is able to be sober and temperate in her actions. Neither drink nor any other substance controls her. She can be trusted in all things and will do what she says she will do. If she says I will be there, she will. She is a jewel of a wife and will greatly enable her husband in his ability to minister in the congregation.
8. **Husband of one wife** – (see discussion under Elders, the same words are used for a Deacon).
9. **Good manager of his children and his own household** – The same basic statement is made concerning an Elder (see the discussion for Elders). The word choice for a Deacon is the same as for the Elder in how he manages his home and children. It is to be done well. The terminology is a bit more detailed as it relates to Elder's children and the respect given his handling of his children. However, to spilt-hairs in this matter would be nearly impossible to distinguish in practice.
10. **First must be tested and proven to be above reproach** - See Above Reproach.

Elder- Deacon Selection Process

The process of selecting an Elder or Deacon is not dictated in the Scriptures. There are principles, models, and warnings that can help guide us in building a solid and God honoring process for selecting Elders and Deacons. Scripture gives a good model for Deacons in Acts 6. Paul gives direction for the appointing of Elders by other Elders in Titus. The apostles established criteria for replacing Judas and left the final choice to God by casting lots. We have attempted to blend the elements of Scripture into a process that gives us the highest probability of selecting the right men. We **know** that as mere men we are prone to error, so we must cast the lots of our lives on God's grace to protect us from choosing wrongly. Before we describe the selection process, it is useful to look at a few Scriptures that focus our attention on the great responsibility that are set forth in the selection of leaders.

Warnings

Paul warns Timothy that Elders are to be acknowledged only after they can be proven to be qualified. The process can not be a hasty one. The context of the passage below is associated with Elders, but the same caution can be seen in the selection of the men in Acts 6. This warning brings the sobering thought that those that give authority over the selection of a man as an Elder will share in the responsibility of the sins of that man. No matter who the man is the Scripture warns against hasty action.

- NAB 1 Timothy 5:22 Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* hastily and thereby share *responsibility* for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

Reasons for Serving

Paul and Peter let us know that an Elder should be a man that desires or strives to attain the office of Elder. No mention of a Deacon's striving is mentioned, but we will assume that a similar conscience exists in a man that exhibits the characteristics required of a Deacon. It is also clear that the reason for striving for this office is not to be something that is done under compulsion, nor for personal gain, and not for achieving power. Men that are striving to be leaders for the wrong reasons are seen in many churches. The selection process we chose needs to ensure that men with suspect motives are found out before they are given authority. They should be men that are eager to be shepherds, setting examples for the congregation, and are not drawn to lording power over those under their care.

- NAB 1 Timothy 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.
- NAB 1 Peter 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be

revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Scriptural Models Useful for Selection of Elders and Deacons

There are three models found in the New Testament used by the church for the selection of men for positions of authority and responsibility. The first we find in Acts 1:15-25. The second we find in Acts 6:1-6, and the third in Titus 1:7-14. Let us look at what principles we can find in these models.

Acts 1 Model

In this model, we see that the current leadership (the apostles) recognized the Biblical mandate of a need for a new man in leadership. They then established the qualifications for the selection of that man, and had those with the necessary knowledge bring forth men that met these qualifications. The leadership then prayed to God for guidance, trusting in the drawing of lots. Evidently, they had no other way to discern between the men. They knew that God knew the hearts of each man and they trusted in His sovereign decision through an act of “chance.” It was clear that they understood that “chance” is not really chance, but God’s sovereign choice. They also understood they had a responsibility to make the best choices they could within human realms. The man was placed in the position of authority by the leadership after he was found to be qualified.

- NAB Acts 1:15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, 16 "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 "For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." . . .21 "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us -- 22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us -- one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection." 23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen 25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Acts 6 Model

This model we have already reviewed under the roles of a Deacon, but a brief refresher is helpful in this context. It is clear from the model we find in this passage that the

congregation and Elders identified a need for men to fulfill a specific position of responsibility. The leadership then established the qualifications for the men. Those with the required knowledge brought forth men that were seen to meet these qualifications. Those in authority then sought God's direction. Finally, these men were placed in the position of authority by the leadership after they had met the qualifications.

- NAB Acts 6:1 Now 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*. 2 So 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." 5 The 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.

Titus 1 Model

This model is one that directly relates to the appointment of Elders. Paul gives Titus very specific guidance that men are needed to watch over the congregations in Crete. He establishes a need for the men. Then he gives qualifications that they must meet. In this case Paul's instructions are to have the appointment done by a man that could maturely evaluate the qualities of these men. There is no mention of others bringing them forth. This does not preclude this from happening, but it is not mentioned. After Titus (a man in authority) saw that these men met the qualifications he was to place them in authority over the local congregations.

- NAB Titus 1:4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6 *namely*, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. 10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.

Summary of Principles

From these models and from other Scripture we can build a solid model for selection of Elders and Deacons. It is clear that we must understand our cultural setting to ensure we properly apply these principles. The specific process includes recognition of these cultural dynamics, without violation of Scriptural dictates. Here are the principles that we can see at work and to which we will adhere.

1. Need -- A need for the men must be established.

- The Bible mandates the existence of Elders (plurality).
- The need to have qualified men in the congregation is established by Scripture.
- A recognized need by the congregation and Elders (that would require a man of the qualities similar to an Elder, but would draw the Elder away from his principle tasks) establishes the need for a Deacon.

2. Qualifications -- The qualifications are established.

- The Bible provides the qualifications for both Elder and Deacon.
- Prudence of understanding the cultural legal issues associated with the organized church within the State may necessitate qualifications that are consistent with, but not prescribed by Scripture, such as church membership.

3. Knowledgeable Inputs -- Those with knowledge of those that meet these qualifications will bring forth the men that appear to meet the qualifications.

- The congregation will be asked to bring forth those that they believe to meet the qualifications.
- The Elders will review these men further.
- Those that appear to meet the qualifications will be brought forth to the congregation to be observed and tested.

4. Review and Caution -- Those that appear to meet the qualifications will be observed and tested to give clear evidence of their qualifications.

- The time of observation and testing has been established for cultural reasons. It is clear that in our society we do not have the daily contact necessary to make judgements concerning men without focused attention and time. We do not want to lay hands on a man too quickly.
- These men will work with the existing Elders and Deacons during their time of observation and testing.
- No time limit has been established for the time of observation and testing.

5. Validation -- Those that are found to meet the qualifications will be given the authority and responsibilities associated with each office.

- The Elders will bring forth men that have been found to meet the qualifications to the congregation to ensure there are no unknown areas that might disqualify the man.

- If no problems are found the men would be granted the title, responsibilities, and authority of the office that the Elders have found them worthy through the laying on of hands.

Selection Process

Step 1 -- Congregation Inputs

- The Elders request inputs for Elders and Deacons from congregation: annually at minimum, at other times as required. Sitting Elders and Deacons will be reaffirmed through this process annually.
- The congregation members may put forth any man that attends the church if they feel he meets the qualification of either office.
 - It is critical that the congregation **only put forth men that they are convinced meets the qualifications**. Those that “might if they only” ... are not the men that should be put forth. If there is no one that you feel meets the qualifications then do not put forth any man. Do not put forth men based only on reputation. You should have some personal knowledge of these men. Reputation is important, but if you do not have any experience with at least some important facet of the man it is best not to bring them forth. God will provide sufficient witness to the men He would want to lead a congregation. There will be others that will know these men well enough if they should be considered.
- The congregation will have two weeks notification prior to the nomination process. Those who are unable to attend may provide inputs during the week following inputs given by the rest of the congregation.

Step 2 -- Elder Review

- The Elders will review those men that are brought forth by the congregation for Biblical qualifications. This process may or may not include interviews with the candidate, his family, or others inside or outside the congregation. Knowledge of the Elders concerning the candidate will dictate the extent of this initial review. Men who do not wish to be considered can let the Elders know during this time of examination. A man should always prayerfully consider the inputs of the congregation and Elders before eliminating himself from consideration.
- Candidates passing the Elders’ review will be presented to congregation as “Aspiring leaders” to be watched by congregation and Elders. They will be associated with the office that they are seen as best fitting at the time of the initial review.
- Those that were not identified as sufficiently meeting the qualifications will remain anonymous.

Step 3 – Observation and Testing

- Aspiring leaders will serve with current leadership (Elders and Deacons) as is fitting the conditions and abilities of those men. Aspiring leaders will participate in leadership meetings and activities as the Elders see fit. They may be included or excluded as a group or as individuals. This is not to be considered as anything other than what the Elders deem as appropriate for the nature of the meeting, the training of the man, or edification of the leadership as a whole. If aspiring leaders are giving specific responsibilities beyond where they are already serving, the congregation will be notified of such specific tasks if they are of a public nature.
- The period of observation is of indeterminate length. A man may be under review for a short period of time or a long period of time. There is no way of knowing how long it will take before there is sufficient tangible evidence of a man's qualities. This is especially true for an Elder. It may be very clear that a man is qualified from previous activities and thus the period would be relatively short. Some men may be in such a position that it will take more time to ensure that they are definitely qualified.
- Candidates are observed, trained, and serve without authority of Elder or Deacon, but under the direction of the Elders/Deacons.
- For Deacons, a task that requires such a man must be identified before the office will be bestowed. This task will either come from the congregation with Elder approval or from the Elders. The congregation will be notified of such a task and the perceived need for a Deacon to take responsibility for that task. Feedback should be given directly to the Elders if this task is seen as not requiring a Deacon.

Disqualification

- If during the period of observation the Elders determine that a candidate has not demonstrated the qualities needed to be an Elder or Deacon they may be disqualified. The congregation will be notified that they will be removed from consideration for leadership for the time being. No reproach should come to such a man unless the disqualification comes from a church discipline action. If the man repents, he should graciously be given full restoration to the fellowship. A man that is disqualified might only be lacking in some small area of his life and should still be seen as an example for others to follow. Since we hold these offices in such high esteem even very good men may fall short in an area for a period of time.
- Men that are disqualified may be restored at a later time by standard selection process.

Self Initiated Elimination

- Men that find that they are unable to serve or feel unable to meet the standards may step down from consideration at any time. This may be for any reason. It is understood that there may be situations with work, home, etc. that may prevent a man from continuing the service that will be required for a season. The congregation will

be notified that a man has voluntarily stepped down for a season. No reproach should be given to a man that recognizes that they cannot fulfill his duties. Wisdom should be acknowledged in such decisions and give even greater credence to the excellent qualities of this man.

- Men that step down may be reinstated to Aspiring leader status with notification of the congregation if the time that they had stepped down has not exceeded 4-6 months (at the Elders' discretion). Otherwise, reinstatement will be according to the standard selection process.

Step 4 -- Approval

- The Elders will review the progress of each man and his demonstrated qualities to determine fitness to assume office. There will be a final review of his life prior to him being brought forth to the congregation. This again can include interviews of his family, congregation members, and those outside the congregation (in the case of Elders).
- The Elders will present candidates that are considered fit to the congregation for final inputs that might not be known to Elders that might disqualify candidate. The congregation will have two weeks to bring any issues to the Elders.
- If no Biblical disqualification is found, Elders "lay hands" on new Elder/Deacon at a time and place that is announced to the congregation at least one week in advance. At this time the man will be given the title, authority, and responsibilities of his office. For a Deacon, his official tasking will be reiterated for the congregation.

Removal of an Elder or Deacon

Removal of an Elder or Deacon is a serious matter. It is clear that the removal of an Elder or Deacon can come from two causes.

1. The first is a church discipline action. This first condition is associated with church discipline and is covered in a separate lesson (see Matthew 18 for the basic process). The one condition that must be met above the typical process is associated with Elders. As the Scriptures state, we can not accept a charge against an Elder without two or three witnesses. (NAB 1 Timothy 5:19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.) It is also clear that if a charge is found to be true against an Elder and he continues in sin, he must be rebuked before the congregation. (NAB 1 Timothy 5:20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning*.) If an Elder is confronted with the necessary witnesses the remaining Elders must be notified at this time. A frivolous charge will not be accepted against an Elder, but neither is an Elder above rebuke or discipline. Gossip must also be eliminated. This will destroy even an innocent man's ability to serve if the conscience of the congregation is seared because of gossip. If those bringing a charge are guilty of gossip, the Elders will deal directly with those causing such strife in the congregation. Deacons have no additional admonition and will be handled in the same manner as the rest of the

congregation, though it is clear that in bringing such a charge the Elders should be immediately notified to ensure a Deacon is not falsely accused and his reputation destroyed needlessly.

2. The second condition that might cause the removal of an Elder or Deacon is that they no longer meet the qualifications of the office. This does not mean that he has fallen into gross sin, but some area of his life has had a setback that would no longer allow him to serve. This is a matter that is difficult to handle since most would see the disqualification as the man is in sin. But it is important to remember that just as very good man might be disqualified from Aspiring leadership, a man that has demonstrated the qualities of an Elder or Deacon may slip sufficiently to make him disqualified. This is a delicate matter that will be handled by the Elders, but it is equally important that the congregation is always on the alert for potential disqualification. This does not mean that we should be on a “witch hunt,” but it is important to never lower the standards of an office just because we are “comfortable” with the leadership. A man may not even see the slide coming, but once notified may be able to take corrective action before the issue becomes a matter of disqualification. No man with the qualities of Elder or Deacon would turn aside from the “wounds of a faithful friend.” If a man is disqualified from serving the congregation will be notified only of the fact that they no longer meet the qualifications. They may very well continue in every other facet of ministry that they had previously been serving. Men that are disqualified for reasons other than unrepented sin should be granted the honor and dignity that they have earned through their service. The prayers of the congregation should be that these men are able to mend the area of weakness so that they may once more serve. Elders and Deacons are rare men, especially in these days of lackadaisical Christianity.

Seasons of Inactivity

Elders and Deacons may be given to times where circumstances force them to set aside their duties for a season. Since we see that God has chosen to bring about a situation that they need to spend more time with family, work, or other pressing matters it is prudent that they be given a time where they may relinquish their duties for a season without the necessity of reexamination. This time period will be determined by the Elders, but will not exceed six months without a reexamination. Elders or Deacons that are in a season of inactivity will be made know to the congregation so that they may pray that the Lord will allow them to return to His service in the congregation as soon as is appropriate. They will retain their titles during this period of inactivity and will not need a re-authentication by the “laying on of hands” once they have been reexamined. The congregation will be notified of the return to full activity.

Deacons Without Tasks

There may be tasks that require Deacons to oversee but are of limited duration. In such cases a man that has received the title of Deacon will retain the title, but will await his

next task. He will continue to serve with the Elders and aid other Deacons with their tasks even if he currently is under-utilized from the formal tasking of a Deacon. He will not need to be re-reviewed so long as he still participates with the leadership. If he chooses to cease his working with the other leaders he will be considered in the same condition as those in the Aspiring leaders that have stepped down for a season. The reinstatement rules and procedures apply to this man. It is clear that such a man should require less review than an unproven man should.

Resignation of Elders or Deacons

Those men that feel they can no longer serve as an Elder or Deacon will submit his written resignation to the Elders. If a man moves from the area or is absent from the congregation for a prolonged period of time (except for stated seasons of absence or inactivity made known to and approved by the Elders), he is considered to have resigned from his office. The Elders will determine how long an unaccounted absence will be tolerated before the man is considered to have resigned by default. This waiting period may not exceed three months. In all cases the congregation will be notified of the resignation and the method (in writing, by relocation, or by absence). The man does not retain his title or any rights or privileges associated with the office. A man considered to have resigned must go through the entire selection process to be re-instated.