

PRIEST - ELDER - DEACON - PASTOR

Ministry Duties in the Local Church

A Bible Study For Small Groups



Bob Self Ministries
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This study series takes a look at the Ministry Duties in the Local Church.

It is designed for use in a Small Group setting. Each person in the Small Group should read and complete the assignments for the week before coming to the Small Group meeting. The Small Group meeting will provide an opportunity for each person to share what they have learned and to ask questions regarding the week's study materials.

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Priest - Elder - Deacon – Pastor 01

Some questions for which we will seek answers in this study:

Did the Priesthood cease to exist when the New Covenant came into being?

How much organization should there be in the church today?

How much structure should there be in the New Testament Church?

Write down questions you have about Priest and the Contemporary Church of today:
(if they are not answered during this study course - be prepared to ask your leader these questions at the end)

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The leadership and organization of the church varies from local congregation to local congregation today. Even within a denomination while they may follow the same organizational layout, there are great varieties of actual practice.

The N.T. does not spell out the priesthood among the N.T. ministers. However, look at what Paul calls his ministry among the Gentiles in Romans 15:16. What does this Scripture say?

Also, at least two writers of the New Testament reflect on the Church with interesting descriptions. What do you see in these Scriptures?

1 Peter 2:9

and Revelation 1:6.

What does 1 Peter 2:5 say about our sacrifices?

What does 2 Timothy 2:12 say about us and Christ?

Many believe the Church to be the "holy nation." What does Exodus 19:6 say about the "kingdom" we are to be part of? (for additional reference you might want to read Revelations 1:5-6, 5:9-10, & 20:6)

These passages have spawned many debates and much has been written regarding just what is really meant by them. Most Bible scholars appear to agree that at the least these passages are saying the Church, as a whole, has been brought to God through the high priestly ministry of Christ. What does 1 Peter 2:9-10 say about the high privilege of mediating Christ is doing?

Many believe the universal priesthood can be traced back into Judaism and O.T. times when Levitical sacrifices were less important than spiritual sacrifices. Any Israelite could offer a spiritual sacrifice although an ordinary Israelite could not be called a priest.

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The Church is to be seen more in a corporate priesthood than in an individual priesthood. No individual priestly office is mentioned in regard to the N.T. Church. It is with this understanding that we should take a close look at the Priest in the O.T., under the old covenant, and seek a better idea of what is expected of us in this royal priesthood under the new covenant.

Is the concept of having a "kingdom of priest" and a "holy nation" a new idea God developed just for the Church?

Is the establishment of the New Testament Church a fulfillment of one of God's original plans?

If so, which plan?

In the Old Testament we find the Priests were fairly well organized and the duties assigned. What does Numbers 1:50 tell us that the priest at large were in charge of?

What does Numbers 4:16 tell us that the priest were in charge of?

Later, when there was an actual building instead of just a tent, the priests were still in charge of any and everything concerning the temple (1 Chronicles 9:11).

What does 1 Chronicles 23:28 tell us regarding the priest?

Beyond the fact the priests were in charge of the temple and everything concerning the temple, it is also evident from the Bible the responsibilities were divided and assigned.

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What does 1 Chronicles 9:28 tell us that the priests were in charge of and were responsible for?

What does 1 Chronicles 9:32 tell us that some of the priests were in charge of every Sabbath?

1 Chronicles 23:29 further reveals they were responsible not only for making sure the bread was placed upon the table; but also to oversee the making of the bread and ensuring it was the proper what”?

What does Numbers 18:8 tell us that Aaron was placed in charge of?

It was not that Aaron handled the offerings alone. What does 1 Chronicles 26:20, 22, & 24 tell us about other priests being given specific responsibilities?

What does 1 Chronicles 26:26 and 2 Chronicles 31:12 tell us regarding the oversight given to some of the priests?

What does Nehemiah 12:44 & 13:4 tell us regarding what other priests were appointed to be in charge of?

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What does Nehemiah 13:13 tell us about the priest in charge of the storerooms were also responsible for?

What does 1 Chronicles 9:20-23 tell us about what some specific priest were assigned to a responsibility?

Did Old Testament Priest just "preach" or teach the Word of God?

List some of the duties or areas of responsibility the O.T. priest had to fulfill:

There are indications that the priest had guidelines to follow in providing music for the house of the lord. What does 1 Chronicles 6:31-32 tell us about this?

What does 1 Chronicles 15:22 tell us that specific priest were placed in charge of?

What does 1 Chronicles 15:27 tell us that one priest was in charge of?

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What does Nehemiah 12:8 tell us that some priests were in charge of?

During the time of Jeremiah, the priests were still expected to be in charge of the house of the Lord. There is evidence in Jeremiah 29:26 that the priests were expected to be in charge of discipline. However, this responsibility of the priest did not let them off the hook from being disciplined themselves. Ezekiel 44:8 speaks forth a serious rebuke. Some of the priests were chastised because instead of carrying out their duties in regard to the Holy Things, they put others in charge of the Sanctuary. The priests were held accountable by God for carrying out their assigned duties within the house of God.

List some specific areas of responsibility for the priest you read about in this study so far:

If the priest were responsible for carrying out discipline, did this relieve the priest from being disciplined themselves?

It is probably error to take the specific assignments of the priest of the Old Testament and assign duties for the ministers of the local church today. However, the overall concept of duties and responsibilities being assigned to specific persons is not. It may take some people longer than it does others; but eventually we will come to the understanding that no one person can do all the ministry, even in a small local congregation. The ministry in the church was intended to be shared and only works well when it is.

The local congregation today may need to find the specific organizational structure that is needed or works best for them. It is good to look at the Old Testament priestly assignments and it is good to look at the way other church organizations are set up. Ultimately, the local church needs to make assignments according to the specific local talents and needs. It is important not to lose the idea of "shared ministry" and shared responsibilities and duties.

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It is also important to remember the rebuke given to the priest who did not see to their duties and tried to get others to take care of their responsibilities. We serve a very personal God. He does hold us accountable for the things we are supposed to do. It is also important to remember the Kingdom Principle Jesus taught.

What does Matthew chapter 25 tell us about what Jesus said regarding those who are faithful?

The local church should be made up of a number of "priest" or ministers who share in the duties and responsibilities of the church. There are a great number of physical responsibilities and duties, and then there are the many spiritual duties and responsibilities. In the smaller church one person may have to perform or oversee multiple duties while in a larger church there may be enough ministers for each to have only one area of responsibility.

One principle will hold true whether it is a small congregation or a large one. The minister should be the "priest and the king" of their home before they are asked to serve as priest over the people of God. When the home life is in disorder, it will greatly cripple the efforts of the minister to serve the people. In some cases we will find the minister has been left vulnerable to temptation because of the disorder in their home. This has been a major factor in the down fall of too many ministers.

Every person serving in the local church, whether paid or volunteer, is fulfilling a priestly duty. Those who clean and straighten up, those who perform administration or business functions, those who teach any age group, those who organize and plan, those who visit the sick, those who lead others to become part of the congregation, and those who do any thing that helps the local church exist or continue are fulfilling as much a priestly work as is the deacon, elder, or pastor.

With this in mind, how seriously should we attend to the work God has called us to in the Church?

Should we be too concerned about the apparent "smallness" of our assigned task or should we attend to our task as though it is the most important one within the church?

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Review this study: Did these Scripture references list or identify every job or responsibility the Priest had in the Old Testament?

Make a detailed list of duties that need to be attended to by someone in the local church - the list need not be in any specific order:

Remember - each one is the job of a "priest"! You may add to the list over the next few days - as you make the list, pray and seek God's guidance as to which of these duties He would have you attend to in your local church.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

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Some of the questions to which we will seek answers in this week's study:

What is an Elder in the Church?

What was the purpose of Elders in the Early Church?

Should there be Elders in the Church today?

What are the qualifications of an Elder?

What are the expected duties of an Elder?

What does Acts 15:2 tell us that Paul and Barnabas were to do?

Who does Acts 15:6 say “met” and “why” did they meet?

What does Acts 15:23 tell us about who sent the letter to the Gentiles?

What does Acts 16:4 tell us that Paul, Silas, and Timothy were delivering?

Elders (or presbyters) appear early in the history of the Church. In the Jerusalem church we find elders serving with James, the apostle, in the government of the local Church. Associated with the apostles, elders shared in the government of the whole Church. It is clear that an apostle can also be a presbyter or elder. What does 1 Peter 5:1 reveal about this?

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The Elders Paul addressed at Ephesus (Acts 20:17); those addressed in 1 Peter; and in Titus have an important place in Church life. These Elders shared in the pastoral oversight and helped provide the stability and the purity of the congregation during crisis. They shared in the ministry of Christ toward the flock. What does 1 Peter 5:1-4 tell us about elders and the congregation?

What does Acts 20:28 tell us regarding the Elders?

What does Ephesians 4:11-12 tell us about the reason God gave ministers to the local church?

In 1 Timothy 5:17 it states teaching and oversight are regarded as desirable functions of the elder (presbyter). Elder as referred to in 2 John and 3 John appears to be someone who is highly esteemed in the local Church and most likely in the local community as well.

Acts 14:23 states clearly it was Paul's practice to appoint Elders in each local church. It is worth noting Paul did this with prayer and fasting. Titus 1:4-5 gives the account of Paul having to leave Crete before being able to appoint Elders in each town. He left Titus behind for the specific purpose of appointing Elders in every town.

This passage only says "as I directed you"; but it is reasonable to believe Paul directed Titus to do this with prayer and fasting since this was his practice. The point to be made here is the early Church had Elders serving in each local congregation or at least each city.

Does it appear the New Testament Church should have Elders?
If so, how should they relate to the local church?

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Qualifications for an Elder are presented in Titus 1:6; list the qualifications you find here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In looking at the qualifications, there is need to be careful and to go slowly. What does it mean to "be blameless", "the husband of one wife", and "whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient"?

An elder is one who is to be "blameless". If it is taken to mean this person never in his life has been guilty of doing anything wrong; then no adult could ever qualify. The New Testament concept of "blameless" is one who has confessed his sins as such and has been forgiven by God (1 John 1:9).

The literal translation of this text is closer to "It is necessary that the overseer be blameless as God's steward." The steward of that day was a person who was the manager of the master's household and was accountable to the master. The emphasis is on the words "it is necessary." The elder is only a servant of the church but is charged with certain duties and is also accountable to God for those duties.

Consider the requirement to be "the husband of but one wife." It does not say the elder must have "a wife." It does not say to "never have had more than one wife"; but says now, at this time, and while serving as Elder be the husband of only one wife. God does not look at men the way we tend to look at each other. God sees each Believer as a New Creature and does not hold our "forgiven past" against us. The Elder does not have to have a wife; but if he does have a wife, it must be only one wife.

The qualification concerning children is just that, children. This does not refer to grown children who no longer live in the parents home. Think about those who became Believers in the first century of the Church. Many, if not most, of those who were selected as Elders probably had grown children.

Since these men had just become Believers, this means their children had been raised in an atmosphere which did not accept Jesus as Messiah. This is asking for the Elder to be a man who has control and authority over those living in his household. This is calling for a man who is training his children in the way of Christ. The Elder is to be a man who can and does exercise authority over his household.

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What are some practical ways we should apply these first three qualifications for an Elder in the local church today? (blameless - husband of one wife - children are believers)

If the Elder is also an Overseer then there are a few additional qualifications as described in Titus 1:7-9; list the ones you find here which are not already mentioned in the first three:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

This text indicates "elder", "overseer", or "bishop" may be used interchangeably in several texts of the New Testament and yet there are some differences. The title "elder" (*presbyteros*) implies one who has maturity and a certain dignity among his fellow men. The title "bishop" (*episkopos*) implies one who has an office, position, or work of "overseeing" God's flock.

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The elder who is also an overseer must not be overbearing. Pride is a terrible sin and seems even worse among God's people and especially the leaders of His people. Being humble is the defense against pride. An elder must follow obediently the will of God and not his own will. An elder who is an overseer simply cannot lord it over the other Believers. He must be one who acknowledges he is able to do nothing without Christ but with Christ can do all things.

An elder who is also an overseer cannot afford to get angry quickly. He is expected to wait until all the facts are available before making a decision. Sometimes those things which appear to be of such nature as to make one furious are quite different when all the circumstances are known. The person with a temper which is easily lost is not ready to be an elder and an overseer of the local congregation. One who flies off the handle easily will not only "spook" the sheep unnecessarily but may very well lead them into dangerous areas in their moments of anger.

An elder who is an overseer is not to be a man who is given to drunkenness. To be specific it does not say he can not drink alcoholic drinks. It says he can not be one who gets drunk. It is worth noting, the one who does not drink alcoholic drinks cannot get drunk. I am convinced this would apply equally to modern drugs that have the ability to take control of one's consciousness. An elder who is an overseer must be a man who does not become intoxicated by alcohol or any other drug.

An elder who is an overseer must be one who is not violent. He cannot be one who is given to physical revenge or any type of abuse. He cannot be one who is apt to start a fight. He must be a man who lives at peace with everyone in as much as it depends upon him.

An elder who is an overseer can not pursue the making of a profit from dishonest means. This would be a good place to remind ourselves we are instructed to avoid the very appearance of evil as Believers in Jesus Christ. If the elder has to make money, then it is very important that he does so through honest efforts and practices.

An elder who is an overseer is to be hospitable. This is much more than just willing to have people over to his house or willing to feed or clothe someone. It is one who is truly hospitable from their heart. It is one who has an open heart to those who may be the very downcast of society.

An elder who is an overseer must be a man who loves those things and activities that are good. He cannot be a man who is in love with sin or the things of this world. The key word in this qualification is "love". It isn't enough that an elder simply do good things. He must "love" the things that are good. A man who does good things, but who has in his heart a "love" for the things of this world is not to be an elder in the church.

An elder who is an overseer simply must be self-controlled. To get an image of this, it helps to relate to something that is self-propelled or someone who is self-motivated. The concept is someone who does not allow or need someone else to control what they do or where they go. An elder must be in control of himself or else he will be unable to surrender to God. If he is under the control of someone else, some evil spirit, or the control of some substance, then he will only be able to do what that controlling thing or person will allow him to do.

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An elder who is to be an overseer - is to be upright in all that he does. This is one who is fair and just in his dealing with others. It also refers to one who conforms his conduct to the right standards as set forth by God's Word.

An elder who is an overseer is to be holy. This denotes a man who has a personal piety and an inner attitude of conforming everything in his life to what is pleasing to God. This is a man who does not allow anything that is un-holy to knowingly enter into or become a part of his life.

An elder who is an overseer must be a man who is disciplined. This is a man who has the inner strength to do what needs to be done even if it is inconvenient or unpleasant. This is a man who can make corrections in his lifestyle and actions when he realizes they do not conform to God's Word. This is the man who can go to God and voluntarily present himself for cleansing should something un-holy manage to come into his life.

An elder who is an overseer must also hold firmly to the trustworthy message to encourage others by sound doctrine and be ready to refute those who oppose truth. An elder must be strong and well grounded in doctrine. He must stick to the Word as it has been taught by the apostles. This doctrinal fidelity will give him the ability to hold his ground as he carries out the two activities mentioned in this text. He is to encourage others not by enticing words but by sound doctrine.

Sound doctrine is teaching that is not only Biblically correct but is teaching that brings spiritual health and spiritual strength. An elder must also refute those who oppose the truth. He must be able to expose the error or un-truth of their stand. An elder need not so such attack the one in error as he needs to simply present the truth clearly. The truth presented will usually expose the error for what it is.

List some reasons why these additional 12 qualifications are needed for the Elder who would also serve as an "overseer" of the New Testament church:

List some ways in which an Elder who does not have these qualifications would harm the ministry efforts of the local church and interfere with the reaching of the "lost" for Christ:

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We all accept Peter as an Apostle. However, we see the address in 1 Peter 5:1 is from Peter, a “fellow elder,” to "the elders." The Apostle John refers to himself as "The Elder" in 2 John 1:1 and in 3 John 1:1. These texts indicate John was not only an apostle but an elder as well.

Apostles are also Elders but Elders are not necessarily Apostles. When a dispute arose, Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go to Jerusalem and see the "apostles and elders" about the question. This account is recorded in Acts 15:2-23. There is also an account in Acts 21:18 where Paul went to see James and "all the elders were present." A person who is an Apostle is also an Elder but a person who is an Elder may not be an Apostle. (A jet is an airplane but an airplane is not necessarily a jet.)

What does 1 Timothy 5:17 regarding some Elders and the local Church?

Elders are due a high degree of respect. The same passage also tells us some Elders are preachers and teachers.

What does 1 Timothy 5:19 say regarding accusations and Elders?

What does 1 Peter 5:1-3 say to the Elders regarding the local congregation?

These Elders are to be an example before the congregation. They are to be men who serve the congregation out of love for them and are not to serve because they simply "must."

Some elders are apostles and are busy about the ministry of establishing churches. Some elders are preachers and are busy about the ministry of proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom concerning God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, and the newness of life. Some elders are teachers and are busy about the ministry of teaching the principles of God's Word in a manner which applies to the everyday life of the Believers. Some elders are busy overseeing the everyday affairs of operating a local church.

There are to be Elders serving as overseers of the local congregation. What does Acts 20:17-28 tell us about this?

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There is a place for one to be recognized as the Pastor of a local congregation; but the Scriptures make it clear the Elders are to be sharing in the "shepherding" of the congregation.

One of the scriptural duties of the Elders of a local body is to acknowledge those who have spiritual gifts. What does 1 Timothy 4:14 tell us regarding this matter?

What does James 5:13-15 tell us Elders and the local congregation?

List some practical everyday ways in which Elders should be serving the local church today:

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One who is to be appointed an elder must be a man who has already demonstrated himself to be:

- 1 - Blameless
- 2 - The husband of only one woman
- 3 - In control and have authority over his household

If an elder is also going to be appointed as one of the overseers of a local congregation, then he should also have already demonstrated himself to be a man who is:

- 1 - Not overbearing
- 2 - Not angered easily
- 3 - Not given to becoming intoxicated
- 4 - Not given to violence
- 5 - Not going to pursue dishonest profit
- 6 - Hospitable from the heart
- 7 - In love with the things that are good
- 8 - Self-controlled
- 9 - Fair and just
- 10 - Holy in lifestyle
- 11 - Disciplined
- 12 - Willing to encourage others with sound doctrine
- 13 - Willing to refute those who oppose the truth

One who is called and anointed of God to be an elder in the local congregation is almost always one who is busy in an area of ministry to the local area. It is not a man who will agree to get busy in the ministry if given a position and title. It is a man who already sees the need in the community, hears the call of God in his heart, and is busy doing what he can to minister to his local area. It is a man who has a vision of what God desires to accomplish locally. It is a man who is demonstrating his commitment to serve God regardless of any title, office, or recognition.

The local church should seek out those who are living their life according to the charge given to Joshua, the High Priest, in Zechariah 3:7; "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among" the spiritual beings (spiritual beings paraphrased).

The local church should have elders who are known and loved by the angels as well as known and hated by demons. For this reason it is then reasonable for the local church to seek out men who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit and whose gift of the Holy Spirit is being used by him and is evident to those in the community.

It should become one of the purposes of the local church to train men and to cultivate them to become elders in the church. Not only to replace those of us who get the blessed opportunity to go home to be with Jesus; but for the purpose of supplying Elders to local bodies that may (and should) come about by the growth of the local church.

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List some qualities or evidences which could be seen in the life of a person that indicates they are qualified and "ready" to become an Elder in the Church:

List some practical ways in which the local church could be training and maturing people to become Elders:

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

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Some of the questions to which we will seek answers in this week's study:

Are Deacons the same thing as Elders ?

What is the ministry of a Deacon ?

While the office of Elder may have been adopted from the Jewish synagogue, the early Church instituted something entirely new in the office of Deacon. The words surrounding our word deacon; *diakoneo*, "to serve"; *diakonia*, "service"; *diakonos*, "server"; refer to a waiter at a meal (John 2:5&9). The meaning was expanded by the early Church to include care for the home and any personal need among the congregation.

The idea of being a "deacon" goes against the grain of our flesh nature. The idea of serving tables was beneath the dignity of the Jewish free man (Luke 7:44-45). In the N.T. "*diakonos*" appears to refer to servants and their masters (Matthew 22:13).

What does John 12:26 tell us about those who would follow Christ?

What does Romans 15:8 tells us about Christ and the Jews?

Jesus became a servant Himself. Christians are to be known as servants of Christ. Jesus directed each believer to serve in this fashion.

What does Mark 9:35 tell us?

What does Mark 10:43 tell us?

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What does 2 Corinthians 11:15 tell us that Jesus was warning about?

It would seem that we should approach the concept of being a servant to fellow believers seriously and honestly. To pretend to be servants of righteousness would put us into the same category as those who serve Satan.

The formal beginnings of the office of deacon (*diaconoate*) can be traced to Acts chapter 6. List the reason or reasons why it was needed to appoint "deacons" at the time recorded in Acts 6:1-7:

List the qualifications which the Disciples required of these first seven men chosen as deacons:

The appointment of these seven leaders was made to free up the apostles from "waiting on tables." This was to provide the apostles greater opportunity to apply themselves to ministering the Word and prayer.

What does Philippians 1:1 tell us regarding "who" Paul greets in this letter?

This text suggest two adjacent offices. In Ephesians 4:11, deacons are not mentioned when Paul list the ministers which are given to equip the Church to do the works of service. Paul instructs Titus (Titus 1:5) to appoint Elders in every Church and again does not mention deacons.

Does the contemporary church still need deacons? If so, why; if not, why not?

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If the contemporary church needs Deacons, then what should their relationship be to the Elders?

What do you see as the qualifications to be a Deacon ?

There is substantial place allotted to the office of Deacon in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. List the qualifications for a Deacon as outlined in this text:

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Deacons are to demonstrate an exemplary moral life style and to be firm in the faith. They do not have to be teachers (1 Timothy 5:17) but they are expected to be practical servants.

In looking at the qualifications for a deacon, we can see some similarity in those for an Elder. As when looking at the qualifications for an Elder, we need to go slowly when we read the qualifications for deacon in 1 Timothy 3:7-13.

Deacons are to be men worthy of respect. This is not speaking only within the church but also in the community. A person does not deserve respect unless he first respects others. A deacon is to be a person who respects the person and rights of the people with whom he comes into contact during the day to day activities of life. (verse 7-8)

A deacon is to be a person who is sincere. Since the ministry of the deacon is clearly that of serving, there is no limit to the tragedy that would result from one trying to serve whose heart and attitude was insincere. In order for a person to effectively minister to the needs of others, they must be sincere in their concern and sincere in his desire to help. (verse 8)

A deacon must be a person who does not indulge in too much wine. As with the Elder, this does not state that the deacon cannot drink alcoholic drinks; but that the deacon should not indulge in "much wine". This would apply equally to intoxicating drugs that have become commonplace in our society. A deacon cannot present himself as sincere when he is under the intoxicating influence of a drug. The most sure way to avoid "much wine" or to avoid indulgence in any intoxicating drug is to avoid the partaking of any at all. (verse 8)

A deacon must be a person who does not pursue dishonest gain. It is very important the deacon make his living through an honorable and honest means. The ministry of the deacon will bring him into contact with people within his own community. If his reputation is that of one who takes unfair advantage of others, they are not likely to receive very much from him in the area of ministry. (verse 8)

A deacon must be one who keeps hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. This qualification seems to re-emphasize the need for respect, sincerity, soberness, and honesty. It is not enough to simply hold to the "deep truths" but they must do so with a clear conscience. Failure in any of the previous qualifications will result in something less than a clear conscience. A person with a guilty conscience usually has difficulty in ministering to the needs of others. The guilty conscience will usually cause the person to misinterpret anything said or done by the other person. (verse 9)

Right in the middle of the list of qualifications is the instruction to test the deacon first (1 Timothy 3:10). If they are found to have nothing against them, then they are to serve. This does not have to be a formal hearing and inquisition process. It can be the observation of and witness to the community and local church that will become evident as a person walks with Christ. But there is a need to have evidence that the person selected to serve in the office of deacon will minister in the attitude of Jesus Christ toward those who are in need. This is the same need for the person who simply needs a place to sit during the service and the person who needs something to feed their hungry children. (verse 10)

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Whether the deacon's wife is to be a deaconess serving with him or not, the following qualifications are very important. The deacon, by the nature of the office, will become aware of personal and sensitive information regarding the lives of the people. In order for a man to serve as a deacon, it is very important that his wife be equally worthy of respect. (verse 11)

It is also important that she be a person who is not given to malicious talk. The wife of the man who serves as a deacon must be a woman who is balanced (temperate) and trustworthy in everything. (verse 11)

The person who serves as a deacon must have only one wife. This is to be seen in the same light and understanding as the requirement for the Elder. This should not be construed to be a requirement that the deacon be married. Neither should it be interpreted to say the man has never had more than one wife. But it is very important that he have only one wife now. (verse 12)

It is also very important the deacon manage his children and household well. This is speaking of those children who are currently living in his home and under his care. Should this be interpreted to include grown children who are now on their own, this would dis-qualify many who come to know Christ after children are grown and were raised as non-believers. (verse 12)

List some practical everyday ways these Biblical qualifications of a Deacon can be of help to the local church:

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What do you think: Can a woman be a Deacon ?

What does 1 Timothy 3:8-13 tell us?

It is relatively clear that women served as Deacons in the New Testament. This can be seen in Romans 16:1, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant (*diakonos*) of the church." The Deaconess Phoebe of Cenchreae is commended by the Apostle Paul. Early Church thoughts were of this being another order of Deacon separate from the men's order of deacons. From the 4th century onward these women were known as Deaconess.

The original text of 1 Timothy 3:11 is ambiguous and can be interpreted "wives" or "women". Some argue this is another order of deacons while others favor the idea of female assistants to the male deacons.

There is documentation from the 3rd century that "deaconess" assisted with baptism of women. These "deaconess" did not teach in the church but were to instruct the post baptismal women in Christian living. These deaconess' also ministered to women in the church who were sick. A later church document provided for the laying on of hands, the ordination, and prayer for the women being set aside as deaconess.

There is no reason to take the qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and use these to disqualify females since they cannot be the "husband of but one wife" and other such similar logic. These qualifications apply just as well in the other direction.

A woman who is to serve as a deaconess must then be the wife of but one husband. She too must have a husband who is not a malicious talker and is trustworthy in all things. The same is true with each of the qualifications. There are very practical reasons to have female deacons within the local church. There are many areas of personal ministry that are highly inappropriate for a male to try to perform for a female. These ministry areas are not only inappropriate but are dangerous to the individual as well as the church.

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List practical ways a woman could serve as a "Deacon" in the contemporary church - identify any areas where it would be inappropriate for a man to serve:

Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Deacon is a technical term which has a recognized ministry within the local church with set and clear qualifications. Throughout the centuries of the church's existence, deacons have been the assistants to the spiritual leaders. Those serving in the office of a deacon demonstrate the serving attitude and work of Jesus Christ.

According to the writings of the early church fathers from the second century, deacons filled a variety of functions within the church. They distributed the elements of the communion, assisted with baptisms, acted as ushers, and helped maintain order during the meetings.

Deacons were also instrumental in administering relief to the widows and orphans, ministered to the Believers who were imprisoned, and served as messengers between churches. Deacons were responsible for the burying of the dead. Deacons were in a sense the eyes and ears of the Elders and Bishops, constantly in contact with the people.

If the Elders and Bishops are giving themselves to prayer and study of the Word, they are not afforded the opportunity to become aware of the many personal needs of the local congregation. The deacons have this opportunity as a natural result of their ministry and can give this kind of information to the elders. This is a very valuable aspect of the deacons' ministry.

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A person who is to serve as a deacon should have already demonstrated themselves to be a person who:

- 1 - Is Worthy of respect
- 2 - Is Sincere
- 3 - Does not indulge in intoxicating substances
- 4 - Does not pursue dishonest gain
- 5 - Holds the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience
- 6 - Has a spouse equally worthy of respect
- 7 - Has a spouse who is not given to malicious talk
- 8 - Has a spouse who is temperate and trustworthy in everything
- 9 - Is married to only one spouse
- 10 - Manages their household and children well

There should be an ongoing discipleship which is preparing Believers to become servants to the local body. It would appear very effective to prepare and ordain husband and wife teams as deacon and deaconess.

The reality is that there will always be some women who will not serve as a deaconess but will, in all other respects, meet the qualifications for their husband to serve. There will be some men who will not serve but would make it possible for their wife to serve as a deaconess.

Without mentioning names of individuals, list some examples of the types of people who meet the above qualifications for serving as a "Deacon." (give examples of choices or reactions which would be evidence to the community of their meeting the above qualifications)

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Read again 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Make a proposed list of qualifications for a "Deacon" in the contemporary church. Use the standards as set forth in the Scriptures but put the qualifications into today's terms:

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Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

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Some of the question to which we will seek answers in this week's study:

Is it God's plan for there to be Pastors in the Local Church?

Is the Pastor also an Elder?

What are the qualifications to be a Pastor?

What part does the Pastor play in the Local Church?

Can a local church have more than one Pastor?

The term "Pastor" that is probably the most common and / or preferred title of Protestant clergy has very few occurrences in the Bible. In the O.T. the closest term means "tend a flock" or "keep company with." In many of the texts of the O.T. where the word is "sheep" it is in Hebrew a word that literally means "flock."

There have been indications from some who are serving as Pastor today that they feel it is too blue collar or too domestic to relate the office of Pastor to the job of a shepherd. They would rather see the Pastor as an executive. Perhaps it will help to look at this from God's perspective.

What does Genesis 49:24 say regarding God and His people?

What does Genesis 48:15 say regarding God and Joseph?

What does Psalm 23:1 say that David called God?

What does Psalm 28:9 ask God to do?

What does Psalm 78:52 say that God did?

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Isaiah 40:10-11 tells us that God tends His flock like a shepherd. "He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young." From these texts we can determine that God does not seem to have a problem being seen as a shepherd.

What does Psalm 95:7 and Psalm 100:3 say about God's people?

This speaks of the dependence upon God for the things needed for our survival, welfare, and daily existence.

What does Numbers 27:16-17 give as the reason Moses prayed that God will appoint a leader for the community?

What is the description of God's people in 1 Kings 22:17?

What does Jeremiah 31:10 say that God will do?

It isn't just God, the Heavenly Father, who is seen in the role of Shepherd.
What does Micah 5:2-5 say about the coming Messiah?

What does Jesus call Himself in John 10:1-18?

What does Peter call Jesus in 1 Peter 5:4?

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What does Peter call Jesus in 1 Peter 2:25?

This passage speaks of those who were like sheep going astray, but they have now returned to “The Shepherd” and Overseer of your souls through Salvation found in Jesus Christ.

Many texts in the Gospels speak of Jesus as a Shepherd and the people as sheep. Jesus had compassion on the people because they were harassed and helpless, "like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36, Mark 6:34). At the time the Disciples were trying to assure Jesus he could count on them, He reminded them of the prophecy, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Matt 26:31, Mark 14:27). Hebrews 13:20-21 speaks of Jesus as "that great Shepherd of the sheep."

What does Matthew 25:32 say regarding Jesus and the judgment?

What does Revelations 7:17 say about the Lamb?

God did not hesitate to represent Himself as a Shepherd to the people. Jesus did not hesitate to proclaim Himself to be a Shepherd to the people. Jesus will be acting as a Shepherd even in the end times. If being compared to, or seen as, a Shepherd was not demeaning to our Heavenly Father and is not demeaning to our Savior and Lord; how can any of us ever say that being seen in the role of a shepherd is beneath us?

List any examples that you have witnessed of God caring for His people like a Shepherd cares for his sheep:

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What does Ezekiel 34:11-16 say about God and His people?

Shepherds were responsible for the physical welfare and the literal survival of their own flock as well as that of their master. Sheep were unlike goats. Sheep required continuous attention from the Shepherd.

What does Ezekiel 34:2-9 list as reasons God prophesied against the shepherds?

It was necessary for the Shepherd to help the sheep find pasture. The Shepherd had to help the sheep find "quiet water" from which to drink safely (Psalms 23:3, Exodus 2:16). The sheep looked to the Shepherd to provide shelter and medication for the sick and injured.

In the O.T. there are texts that tell us God appoints men to be shepherds over His people.

What does Numbers 27:16-17 in this regard?

What does 2 Samuel 7:7 and 1 Chronicles 17:6 say that God commanded men to do?

What does Ezekiel 34:23-27 say God will do?

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They will have provision and protection because of the shepherd God will give the people.

What does Psalms 78:70-72 tell us?

What does Isaiah 44:24-28 say regarding Cyrus?

What does Jeremiah 17:15-16 tell us the prophet did not run away from?

Who appoints people to be a Pastor; God or man?

Does God command some to be Pastors, or does He only ask?

There are references to shepherds of old being accompanied by dogs which were used for protection against wild animals. There is no indication these dogs were used to round up the sheep. The Shepherd led the sheep and controlled them by means of his voice, music, or whistle (Isaiah 5:26). God never intended to have His sheep "driven" but has set the example for the shepherd to "lead" His sheep.

While the Shepherd led the sheep, there were in large flocks, "under shepherds" who might follow along the side or the rear of the flock to help guard the flock and help prevent the sheep from scattering.

What does 2 Samuel 7:8 tell us that God said about David? (also 1 Chronicles 17:7)

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What does Amos 7:15 say regarding Amos?

These under shepherds could help encourage the weary and assist the newborns.

What does Numbers 27:18- 20 tell us about God's instructions to Moses?

Under Shepherds did not lead the sheep but assisted the Shepherd as he led them until such time as they were made a shepherd over a flock.

The shepherds God appointed were held responsible for the sheep. What does Ezekiel 34:8-10 say about accountability?

What does Zechariah 10:2-5 tell us?

What does Zechariah 11:8-17 tell us?

Jesus taught about shepherds and sheep relationships. He revealed some important aspects of these relationships in John chapter 10. List the things Jesus reveals about this relationship in John 10:

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Even from the very beginning of the early church there were some expectations concerning the shepherds (pastors) of God's people.

What does 1 Peter 5:1-4 say about Elders?

He says elders should serve as overseers in the church not out of an attitude that they must but in an attitude and heart of being willing. The shepherds are not to be greedy in leading the church but they should be eager to serve.

List examples of how a proper Pastor would conduct himself towards the congregation in a contemporary church:

Qualifications for the office of a Pastor (or overseer) are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-2:10. List all the qualifications you can find in these two text:

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It is a noble task to desire to be a pastor. The person serving in the office of a Pastor is also an Elder in the church. Most of the qualifications for Pastor are covered in the section on Elders and will not be repeated here. The Pastor must be a qualified Elder before being considered to serve as a Pastor.

The Pastor must not be a recent convert. There is danger for the recent convert who is placed in the office of Pastor over the flock to become conceited and to fall "under the same judgment as the devil." It is easy to blame the young and inexperienced Pastor who falls, but the organization or people who placed them in that position will share the blame.

There are many deceivers who are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not teach. They are teaching the things they teach simply for the purpose of dishonest gain. It is one of the responsibilities of the Pastor to silence the false teachers as far as his congregation (or flock) is concerned. The Pastor is to rebuke these false teachers sharply and to lead the people to pay no attention to the commands they give. The Pastor is to lead the people to pay no attention to religious myths.

The Pastor must not be a lover of money. There is no problem with money. The problem is with the "love of money" which is the "root" of all kinds of "evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). The Pastor must have his love clearly focused upon God, then upon God's people. The love of money will distract the mind and energy of the Pastor away from caring for the flock and eventually into every kind of evil.

The Pastor must be "able to teach" what is in accord with sound doctrine. The outline of what is to be taught by the Pastor is given.

What does Titus 2:2 say that the Older Men should be taught?

What does Titus 2:3 say that Older Women should be taught?

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It is worth noting at this point the Scripture says the Pastor is to teach the "older women" and then the older women are to teach the "younger women." Many fallen Pastors would no doubt say a hearty "amen" to this principle. As a result of the Pastor teaching the older women, they are to teach the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so no one will malign the Word of God.

Knowing these Scriptural expectations should help direct the Pastor in the way the "older women" are instructed. Rather than spending too much time on where the "older" and "younger" age groups begin and end, it would be better to understand this to refer to spiritual maturity as much if not more so than chronological years. The spiritually mature will look at relationships differently than will those who are immature and are still seeing things through eyes of flesh.

What does Titus 2:6 say the Pastor is to teach young men?

He is to set an example for the young men by doing what is good in everything. In his teaching he is to show integrity, seriousness, and to be careful that he does not use words or phrases that can be misconstrued to mean evil. The language of the Pastor in teaching the young men is important. As much as young women have a tendency to develop an attachment to their teacher, the young men have a tendency to develop an irreverence and a lack of respect for others. The Pastor's words can leave room for the young men to think this is acceptable or can help them develop a proper respect for things and people who deserve respect and honor.

Pastors are also to teach those who are subject to others to try to please their masters. They are to be taught not to talk back to them and certainly not to steal from them. The Pastor is to teach them to show they can be fully trusted. In our society today we seem to have been overtaken by an attitude of my employer, my boss, my government owes me something whether I perform or not. This has even infiltrated the church. While we cannot teach people it is okay to sin even if ordered to do so, we must teach them to obey the authorities over them as long as it does not violate God's commands. They must demonstrate to the authorities over them they can be trusted to do what they are instructed without having to be watched over. This has a direct application to employees in our society.

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List proper ways the Pastor of the contemporary church should go about teaching the men and women of the congregation:

There is a Pastoral ministry that is an endowment to help meet the needs of the local congregation but does not necessarily have a designated office. This Pastoral ministry may be performed by anyone within the local congregation. This pastoral ministry speaks more of a moral or spiritual relationship to others than it does to an office. Many aspects of this ministry are performed by the other Elders, the deacons, and mature members of the congregation.

The Pastor is one of the gifts which God has given to the Church (Ephesians 4:8,11). While evangelist, apostles, and prophets, minister more to the church at large, the pastor and the teacher serve the local congregation.

What does Ephesians 4:12 identify as one of the jobs of the Pastor?

One holding the office of Pastor must be faithful to the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 2:25). This is the concept of the under shepherd who does not attempt to lead the flock according to his own choosing but helps "the Shepherd" lead the flock according to His plan and purpose.

People can "go astray" and become separated from the Shepherd (Isaiah 53:6) (Matthew 18:12) (1 Peter 2:25) and the prevention of this straying is a major responsibility of the Pastor. When the flock is straying from the presence of the "Great Shepherd" they cannot be prepared for the work God has called them to do.

One of the reasons God gave the church Pastors is to help equip and train them to do the works of service. The reason people are to be trained and prepared for the works of service is so "the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

While about the task of training, teaching, and equipping, it is important for the Pastor and the people to remember it is the Holy Spirit who makes a person an overseer or Pastor (shepherd) over the people (Acts 20:28). This should help keep the Pastor's own personal attitude in the proper perspective and help the people render the proper respect toward the Pastor.

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It is important for the local Church to have continued access to the one who helped start the church and perhaps operated in an apostolic office. It is very important for the local church to have continuous contact and or access to those who operate in the office of prophet and evangelist. But this is not enough for the local church to be healthy and successful.

The New Testament leaves us with no doubt that God's intent is for every local congregation to have a Pastor, if not pastors. It is also very clear that the N.T. plan for the local church is for there to be many "priest" sharing in the responsibilities and duties. This is not just the standard ministry positions of teaching and preaching; but includes everything that is necessary to maintain and operate the local church.

The N.T. and the New Covenant relationship tells us that every Believer is a "priest". Then every Believer (priest) should be taking hold of their personal ministry position within the local church and accepting the responsibility given then by the Holy Spirit. They should also remember that God will hold each accountable.

God does not intend for the ministry of the contemporary local church to be carried out by one person or a small group of persons any more than He intended the First Century Church to do so. Every believer has a place to minister or assist in the ministry. As we assist, we are to be equipped and trained.

The list of qualifications for Pastor are summarized as follows:

- 1 - must not be a recent convert
- 2 - husband of but one wife
- 3 - must manage his own family well
- 4 - his children obey him with proper respect
- 5 - not given to drunkenness
- 6 - not violent but gentle
- 7 - not quick tempered
- 8 - not quarrelsome
- 9 - not overbearing
- 10 - not a lover of money
- 11 - not pursuing dishonest gain
- 12 - be above reproach
- 13 - must have a good reputation with outsiders
- 14 - must be blameless
- 15 - temperate
- 16 - self controlled
- 17 - respectable
- 18 - hospitable
- 19 - one who loves what is good
- 20 - one who is holy and disciplined
- 21 - must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught
- 22 - able to teach must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine

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If you find a Pastor who already meets the above listed criteria - could they possibly remain qualified without the continuous prayer support of the people of the church?

What can you do to help someone become qualified to be a pastor?

What can you do to help a pastor remain qualified?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: