

IV. THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

A. WHO MAY FILL THE OFFICE OF PASTOR AND WHAT IS HIS JOB DESCRIPTION?

1. The office of pastor is designated by various titles which refer to the same person.
 - a. The title bishop (episkopos) means overseer or guardian and refers to the office or position that the pastor holds (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7).
 - b. The title elder (presbuteros) means a mature person and refers to the spiritual maturity this person possesses and the authority that goes with this position (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; I Tim. 5:17,19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Pet. 5:1).
 - c. The title pastor (poimen) means shepherd and refers to his work of feeding and caring for the flock which God gives him (I Pet. 5:1-4).
2. The office of pastor involves a divine call to men who are given a specific spiritual gift (Eph. 4:11; II Tim. 1:9; Heb. 5:4; Acts 20:28).
3. The office of pastor requires certain qualifications of a man to fill it (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).
 - a. In relation to personal character (I Tim. 3:1-3) he has to have a personal life which is above reproach. He cannot be divorced or have two living wives.
 - b. In relation to family life (I Tim. 3:4,5) he has to first be able to rule well over his own family.
 - c. In relation to spiritual maturity (I Tim. 3:6) he has to be an experienced and spiritually mature Christian.
 - d. In relation to others in the community (I Tim. 3:7) he has to have a good testimony among those unsaved.
4. The office of pastor comprised a number of individuals in the early churches (Acts 14:23; 15:2; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14). It seems most probable that each house church had a single elder or pastor who together with the elders in other churches constituted the elders of the church in a particular city.

- a. Notice when Christ addressed the churches of Revelation 2,3 the letters were sent to the angel or messenger of each church. This seems to infer one pastor of each church.
 - b. Notice in I Tim. 3:2,12 Paul lists the qualifications for a bishop (singular), but when he lists the qualifications for deacons it is plural. This intimates that each church had one pastor and several deacons.
5. The office of pastor involved certain duties and responsibilities.
- a. The pastor is to have the general oversight of the church or assembly which God has given him (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2). He is to superintend every aspect of the ministry of a church and he is responsible before God for what a church does.
 - b. The pastor is to feed the flock spiritually by his example and ministering the Word of God to them (I Pet. 5:2). This will equip the saints for service (Eph. 4:11,12).
 - c. The pastor is to lead the flock and protect them from false teachers and from those even within the church who would cause harm (Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28-30).
 - d. The pastor is to reprove those doing wrong (II Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9).
 - e. The pastor is to teach, preach, and be involved in reaching the lost (II Tim. 4:5; I Tim. 3:2; 4:14-16).
6. The office of pastor was filled in the early church in a two-fold manner.
- a. As new churches began the apostles appointed elders or pastors for those churches (Titus 1:5). The word ordain is the same word used in Acts 6:3 and means "to appoint". The "laying on" of hands seems to have been the visible symbol of ordination or appointment (I Tim. 4:14; 5:22-25). This act was used in the O.T. to set someone apart for an office (Num. 27:22,23).
 - b. It seems that the individual church or assembly, along with the apostolic appointment of a man, approved this selection by a vote (Acts 14:23). The word ordained here means to choose by "stretching out the hand". This is the word used in II Cor. 8:19.
 - c. Ordination of a pastor symbolized by laying on of hands was a recognition of appointment by an apostle and approved by the assembly.

B. WHO MAY FILL THE OFFICE OF DEACON AND WHAT IS HIS JOB DESCRIPTION?

1. The office of deacon required certain qualifications of a man to fill it (I Tim. 3:8-13).

a. In regard to personal character (8).

The deacons had to have a good testimony which included honest dealing and above reproach when it came to wine and money.

b. In regard to the truth (9).

The deacons had to live a life which was consistent with what they believed Scripturally.

c. In regard to being used (10).

The deacons had to first be proved that their life was above reproach before they could serve.

d. In regard to family life (12).

The deacon had to be the husband of one wife and rule well over his family. Their wives had to be faithful in all things as well (11).

2. The office of deacon involved whatever kinds of service that the elders or pastors delegated to them.

a. Since the word deacon meaning "one who serves" is not mentioned in Acts 6:1-6 it is not certain that this was the formation of this office in the Jerusalem church; however, what these men were appointed to do is descriptive of what deacons are to do and why they are to do it rather than the pastor (6:2,4).

b. Notice there are no specific duties in the N.T. assigned to deacons. Mention is made of certain ones who served in various ways and may have been those who filled this office (Acts 13:5; 19:22; Col. 4:7; Acts 20:4,5; I Cor. 16:15,17; Phil. 2:25; 4:3).

c. Some things are very conclusive. There is no Biblical basis for a board of deacons as such and deacons are not to run the affairs of the church. Those who serve in this office should comprise those who have the spiritual gifts of helps (I Cor. 12:28).

3. The office of deacon involved the selection of several spiritual men for an undisclosed term of service.

a. From Phil. 1:1 we may gather that the deacons occupied a particular place in the church.

b. Notice while some contend that Rom. 16:1 allows for deaconesses in the church this runs contrary to the qualifications laid down in I Tim. 3:12. Phoebe was a woman who served in the church at Cenchrea but she did not fill the office of deacon.

c. Although seven men were chosen to serve in a specific way in Acts 6 there is no N.T. rule for the number of deacons that a church should have. A practical rule would be one for every fifty members of a church.

d. There are no Scriptures in regard to the selection of deacons or the matter of whether they should be ordained. In Acts 6 those whom the church appointed or chose were set before the apostles who laid hands upon them (Acts 6:6). Since it is not certain that those appointed in Acts 6 were appointed to fill the office of deacon, it is not certain whether deacons should be ordained.

C. WHY DO WE USE OTHER PERSONS IN OTHER POSITIONS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH?

As a matter of practical value there are other positions such as trustees, clerk, and treasurers which are filled to carry on the ministry of a local church to avoid legal complications and aid in its ministry. While no precedent or qualifications are laid down for these in Scripture they need to be filled by spiritually mature and responsible individuals.