

River of Life Structure & Organizational Chart

Jesus Christ

Elders

River Leadership Team

Deacon

Deacon

Deacon

Deacon

Deacon

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Ministry

Crowd & Community

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Jesus Christ is the Head of the Local Church

- 1) He has supreme authority (Mt. 28:18, Eph. 1:20-22, 5:23, Col. 1:18, Jude 1:25).
- 2) He alone is the one we look to for total direction (1 Tim. 2:5).
- 3) He gives a gift to the local church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors & teachers
- 4) He gives the local church this to equip them for the work of service and the building up of the body of Christ, to mature you in faith & also for church unity. (Eph. 4:11-16)

The Pastor(s) or Elders Had the Highest Authority After the Apostolic Age

- 1) Paul put elders in charge in churches (Acts 14:23).
- 2) Paul told Titus to appoint elders (Titus 1:5).
- 3) The church is told to obey its spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:17).
- 4) “Elder” and “overseer” are interchangeable terms (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Peter 5:1,2), indicating their role in authority.
- 5) “Ruling” was one role of elders (2 Timothy 5:17).

Who were the Elder(s)?

Sometimes they are called “elders” (Greek – presbuteros), a term that emphasizes the qualification of spiritual maturity needed. Sometimes they are called “overseers” (Greek – episcopos), a term that emphasizes their function of leading. The terms are used interchangeably of the same men (Acts 20:17,28).

What are an elder’s qualifications?

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 describe an elder’s qualifications. Spiritual character is emphasized over specific functions.

“Above reproach” – no cause for just criticism

“Husband of one wife” – monogamous fidelity

“Temperate” – self-control

“Prudent” – wise decision-maker

“Respectable” – orderly, organized

“Hospitable” – willing to share his home

“Able to teach” – can communicate spiritual truth

“Not given to wine” – not addicted

“Not pugnacious but gentle” – patient, not violent

“Uncontentious” – not insistent on rights, peaceable

“Free from the love of money” – not greedy or “in it for the money”

“Manages his household well... children under control” – discipline, peace and order at home

“Not a new convert” – to avoid pride

“Good reputation with outsiders” – has the respect of unbelievers

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“Not self-willed” – genuine concern for others interests, not just his own

“Not quick tempered” (self-explanatory)

“Loves what is good” – can discern what is spiritually beneficial

“Just” – law-keeping himself and fair with others

“Devout” – avoids sin and is committed to God

“Hold fast the faithful Word” – knows doctrinal truth

What are an elders duties?

- a. “Shepherd and care for the flock” (1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 3:5; James 5:14,15). This means he takes responsibility for their spiritual care.
- b. “Be an example to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). Consciously models and disciples others in the Christian life.
- c. “Teaching God’s Word” (Acts 20:20; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; etc.)
- d. “Guard against false doctrine” (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9)
- e. “Rule” (1 Timothy 5:17). This means to direct the church’s affairs.

How many elders should there be in a church?

No number is given. According to scripture, this role is limited to a male. The pastor(s) or overseer(s) are the elders. There will be one main elder, and if possible, others assigned for this role (providing there is more than one man qualified to be an elder). Within our association, our elder(s) confide with each other for wisdom and counsel. Although all of the churches in our association are completely autonomous, there is tremendous advantage to shared wisdom and accountability.

They Set Up Deacons to Help Them (team of servant leaders)

- 1) They (with the congregation) selected deacons (Acts 6:3-5).
- 2) This was typically a team of servant leaders to help the overseer focus on his duties or prayer and the preaching of the word. (Acts 6:4)
- 3) They set qualifications in scripture for deacons and deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:8-13).
- 4) A deacon(ess) is a servant to the church and to God.

Who are the deacons?

The word “deacon” actually means “servant” and can be used of any servant (Ephesians 6:21; 1 Corinthians 3:5, etc.). But in Acts 6:1-6 a group of men were officially designated as servers/deacons for a specific physical need in the Jerusalem church. Later, Paul used the word “deacon” in the official sense of a church office and described their qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13). So it seems that deacons are formally established as church officers. They are to assure particularly that the physical needs of the church body are met. This office is open to man or a woman as defined by the scriptures. (1 Tim. 3:11, Romans 16:1)

What are a deacon’s qualifications?

1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-3 describe a deacon’s qualifications:

“Good reputation” – same as elder

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“Spiritual” – men who consistently walk in the Spirit’s control

“Wise” – same as elder

“Dignified” – same as elder

“Not double-tongued” – honest, not telling conflicting stories

“Not addicted to much wine” – same as elder

“Not fond of sordid gain” – parallel to elder

“Holding to the mystery of the faith” – parallel to elder

“Beyond reproach” – same as elder

“Husband of one wife” – same as elder

“Good managers of their children and household – parallel to elder

- Also, a deaconess and also the deacon’s wife must be “dignified, not malicious gossips, temperate and faithful in all things” (1 Timothy 3:11).

What are a deacon’s duties?

There is only the general indication that deacons serve to meet physical needs to free up other spiritual leaders to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). But that does not limit deacons. They have spiritual qualifications and may have other spiritual gifts for significant personal ministry. One deacon, Philip, was an outstanding evangelist and preacher (Acts 8:4-8; 26:40: 21:8). Stephen, another deacon, is noted for his faith and his preaching (Acts 6:5; 6:8-7:60).

The Local Church Had Authority

1) They selected deacons (Acts 6:3-5).

2) They sent Paul and Barnabas to help settle a doctrinal dispute (Acts 15:2,3) and then confirmed, with the other elders, how the issue should be settled (15:22).

3) They administered church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:6,7).

4) They sent out missionaries (Acts 11:22; 2 Corinthians 8:19).