



The New Testament Church

The Offices of the Church

I. THE OFFICES IDENTIFIED

- A. The Office of a Bishop (1 Timothy 3:1)
- B. The Office of a Deacon (1 Timothy 3:10)
- C. The Obsolete Office of an Apostle (Romans 11:13)—*taken from an article by David F. Reagan*

1. New Testament apostles

- a. The apostles played a crucial role in the ministry of Christ and in the establishment of the early churches.
 - (1) God set in the church “first apostles” (1 Corinthians 12:28).
 - (2) *Apostle(s)* (found only in the New Testament) occurs in one form or another eighty-three times.
 - (3) The word *apostle* means sent one, and refers to those sent by Christ for the special work to which He called them.
- b. There were at least seventeen men who were called apostles:
 - (1) The original Twelve
 - (2) Matthias, the replacement for Judas
 - (3) Paul, as the least of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:9)
 - (4) Barnabas, in one place with Paul—“Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul...” (Acts 14:14)
 - (5) James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19)
 - (6) Jesus, the Apostle...of our profession (Hebrews 3:1)
- c. Of these, Matthias was chosen to replace the fallen Judas.
 - (1) There is no record of any others being replaced at death.
 - (2) If death required an apostle to be replaced, we should have seen a replacement chosen for James after his death in Acts 12:2.
- d. Paul was an apostle, but was an exception to the rule for apostles.
 - (1) He declared himself “the least of the apostles . . . not meet to be called an apostle” (1 Corinthians 15:9).
 - (2) The twelve were called to minister to the Jews, but Paul was “**the** apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13).
 - (3) Paul had the same calling and authority in reaching the Gentiles as the twelve had in reaching the Jews (see Galatians 2:7-8).

2. Not apostles and apostles

- a. Are all apostles? (1 Corinthians 12:29)
 - (1) If we can call missionaries apostles because *apostle* means sent one, practically every servant of God is an apostle.
 - (2) To use the word in this weakened form minimizes what God did with the apostles of the New Testament.
 - (3) It causes a confusion of understanding.
 - (4) The Bible does not use the word in such a common way.



- b. Big Apostle and little apostle
 - (1) If someone is an apostle, he must have the New Testament authority and power of an apostle.
 - (2) The office of apostle carried great weight and those who use this title are in effect, if not in actuality, claiming this authority.
 - (3) We need to be careful about using such a title even when we mean well in doing so.
- 3. A unique calling
 - a. Special calling
 - (1) Jesus prayed all night and called unto him his disciples and “of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:12-13).
 - a) These men were already disciples.
 - b) There were other disciples who were never called apostles.
 - c) The twelve were given a special office as representatives of the Master.
 - d) Their position was exalted to the point that they will sit on the thrones of the twelve tribes of Israel in the time of the kingdom (Matthew 19:28).
 - (2) Paul was also given a very special, though separate, calling.
 - a) He often reminded those to whom he ministered that he was “called to be an apostle” (Romans 1:1) and that this calling was “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father” (Galatians 1:1).
 - b) In Romans 11:13, he said, “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.”
 - (3) This was not a basic calling to preach but a calling to represent God on earth in a special way.
 - a) The apostles could remit or retain sins (John 20:22-23).
 - b) What they bound or loosed on earth would be bound or loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:18).
 - c) They spoke the word of God and confirmed those words with signs following (Mark 16:17-20).
 - d) We must not minimize their power and authority by giving the title to men who were not meant to have it.
 - b. Special qualifications
 - (1) The qualifications of the apostles were given in Acts 1:21-22.
 - a) With Jesus during His earthly ministry (Acts 1:21)
 - b) Baptized by John the Baptist (Acts 1:22)
 - c) Eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22)
 - (2) Paul was given an exemption on the first requirements, but emphasized his having been an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ—“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). But Paul admitted to being the least of the apostles in qualifications (1 Corinthians 15:9).



- c. Special confirmation
 - (1) What established the claims of apostleship?
 - a) Paul warned of “false apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:13), but how could someone tell a false apostle from a true one?
 - b) Paul spent much time in 2 Corinthians confirming his apostleship and summed it up in 2 Corinthians 12:12—
“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”
 - (2) A genuine apostle had the signs of an apostle.
 - a) These signs included wonders and mighty deeds.
 - b) Paul did many “mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God” (Romans 15:19), confirming his calling.
 - c) They could therefore rest assured that he was indeed the apostle to the Gentiles.
 - d) The other apostles also performed miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:12).
- d. Again, are all apostles?
 - (1) Paul’s apostleship was “out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8).
 - (2) There may be men and women today who are doing some of the duties of an apostle.
 - a) They are sent by God to do a specific work.
 - b) That does not give them the office of an apostle.
 - (3) We need to avoid calling people apostles in any particular sense.
 - a) It causes confusion.
 - b) It does not fit our day and age.
 - c) It does not conform to the scriptures.

II. THE DISTINCTION OF AN OFFICE

A. Not a Right

- 1. There are many things we receive in the Christian life as a birthright from our salvation.
- 2. The offices of the New Testament church do not fall under that category.

B. Can Be Given and Taken Away

- 1. An office is an appointed position.
- 2. Therefore, it is never assumed to be a lifetime appointment.
- 3. Just as a person was given an office, he may also be removed from that office.
- 4. Nothing in the Bible declares either office as a lifetime appointment.
- 5. Note: Perhaps it is regional, but in our area it is common for churches to give lifetime appointments to deacons, while voting on a pastor annually.

C. Brings Responsibility



III. THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP

A. Other Titles Used

1. Confusion between elder and bishop

a. The elder

- (1) His age (Genesis 10:21; 1 Timothy 5:1-2)
- (2) His wisdom (Job 32:4-7)
- (3) His leadership
 - a) Old Testament (Numbers 11:14-17) “officers over them”
 - b) Gospels (Matthew 21:23)
 - c) Jewish church (Acts 15:1-4)
 - d) Gentile church (1 Timothy 5:17)
- (4) Their number in the church—multiple (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17-18; Titus 1:5)

b. The bishop

- (1) His office (1 Timothy 3:1); *bishop* means *overseer*
- (2) His duties
 - a) To work (1 Timothy 3:1)
 - b) To teach (1 Timothy 3:2)
 - c) To rule (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
 - d) To pattern (1 Timothy 3:7 with 1 Peter 5:3)
 - e) To administrate (Titus 1:7)
 - f) To exhort (Titus 1:9)
 - g) To convince (Titus 1:9)

c. Comparison of elder and bishop

- (1) Both rule in the church
 - a) Elder (1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:28)
 - b) Bishop (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
- (2) Both can be multiplied in one church
 - a) Elder (Acts 14:23)
 - b) Bishop (Philippians 1:1)
- (3) Both terms are used synonymously in Titus
 - a) Elder (Titus 1:5)
 - b) Bishop (Titus 1:7)

d. Conclusions

- (1) The term *elder* has a wider range than the term *bishop*.
 - a) Elder may refer to Old or New Testament offices.
 - b) It may also refer to men of age, experience, and/or wisdom.
 - c) Bishop refers to a specific New Testament office.
- (2) The terms may be used as synonyms of the term *pastor*, but are used to describe different aspects of the same office.
 - a) Elder emphasizes the person
 - i) His experience
 - ii) His wisdom
 - iii) His spirituality
 - b) Bishop emphasizes the office



- i) His duties
 - ii) His rule
 - e. Problem: Why do we, unlike the Plymouth Brethren, have a single ruling pastor?
 - (1) The scriptural principle: God always uses a man: Abraham, Moses, David, etc. Multiple rule brings confusion.
 - (2) The example of James in the church of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:17-18)
 - (3) The example of Timothy in the church of Ephesus (1 Timothy 5:17-19; 2 Timothy subscript)
 - (4) The emphasis on a singular bishop ruling the church, and the example of the family (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
 - 2. Overseer (Acts 20:28)
 - a. Only New Testament reference
 - b. To take the oversight (1 Peter 5:2)
 - 3. Preacher
 - a. His duty—to make the gospel heard (Romans 10:14-15)
 - b. His office
 - (1) Ordained (1 Timothy 2:7)
 - (2) Appointed (2 Timothy 1:11)
 - 4. Pastor (Ephesians 4:11)
 - a. Only New Testament reference
 - b. Means *shepherd* (see also 1 Peter 5:1-4)
 - 5. Minister
 - a. Means *one who attends to the needs of another*
 - b. References: Romans 15:16; Ephesians 3:7; Ephesians 6:21; 1 Timothy 4:6
- B. The Qualifications of a Bishop (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)
- 1. He must be a man (1 Timothy 3:1).
 - a. “If a man” desire the office (1 Timothy 3:1)
 - b. The husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2)
 - c. Ruleth well his own house (1 Timothy 3:4)
 - d. “If a man” know not how to rule (1 Timothy 3:5)
 - 2. He must be blameless (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7).
 - a. Forms of the word *blame*
 - (1) *Blame* occurs four times (Genesis 43:9; Genesis 44:32; 2 Corinthians 8:20; Ephesians 1:4).
 - (2) *Blameless* occurs fifteen times (Genesis 44:10; Joshua 2:17; Judges 15:3; Matthew 12:5; Luke 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 2:15; Philippians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:2, 10; 1 Timothy 5:7; Titus 1:6, 7; 2 Peter 3:14).
 - (3) *Blamed* occurs two times (2 Corinthians 6:3; Galatians 2:11).
 - (4) *Unblameable* occurs two times (Colossians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:13).
 - (5) *Unblameably* occurs one time (1 Thessalonians 2:10).



- b. A general definition is *a guilty responsibility concerning a matter*.
 - c. We can only be perfectly blameless in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:8). Therefore, the bishop must be one who is saved.
 - d. However, there is also a practical side of being blameless.
 - (1) It means to have no fault that others can righteously condemn.
 - (2) A man of God must be one who has done all that can be done to make wrongs right.
 - (3) If he has wronged someone, he has made/is making it right.
3. He must be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).
- a. The controversy introduced
 - (1) Does this mean *only one marriage*?
 - (2) Does this mean *only one wife at a time*?
 - (3) Does this mean *only one scriptural marriage at a time*?
 - (4) Does this mean *a single man does not qualify*?
 - b. In some circles, this is the most controversial of all the qualifications. Perhaps it is because:
 - (1) The phrase is open to multiple interpretations.
 - (2) The interpretation deeply affects people's lives.
 - c. Is this qualification an argument against bigamy?
 - (1) One of the most common interpretations is that the phrase refers to bigamy; that is, a man being married to two wives.
 - (2) The language of the phrase would allow for this interpretation.
 - (3) However, there are serious problems:
 - a) The problem referred to in 1 Timothy and Titus had to be a common one, because of the prominence given to it in the lists of qualifications.
 - b) No other verses in the entire New Testament say anything about the sin of bigamy.
 - c) Historical records show that neither the Romans nor the Jews of New Testament times commonly practiced bigamy.
 - i) Both groups preferred to divorce and remarry.
 - ii) The Romans would have mistresses in addition to their wife, but she was not considered a wife.
 - d. Is this qualification an argument against divorced pastors?
 - (1) The connection with blamelessness points to a connection with divorce and remarriage. In both lists, the first qualification is to be blameless and the second is to be the husband of one wife. Very likely, being the husband of one wife is one of the ways to be blameless. Consider the following:
 - a) God speaks of divorce and remarriage (except in certain cases) as a commission of the sin of adultery (Mark 10:9-12). This would certainly bring blame on the guilty parties.
 - b) After divorce and remarriage has been committed, there is no way to go back and fully make up for the blame.
 - (2) A pastor and his family are to be "ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).



- a) A pastor is to live such a life before his people that it can be used as a pattern for the lives of the church members.
 - b) One of the most common problem areas in ministry is that of marriage problems. A man who has been divorced and remarried, for whatever reason, will have little credibility when he tells his members that they must remain together in their marriage in order to be right with God.
- (3) God holds the testimony of those who have married once as more worthy of honour.
- a) The “widow indeed” in 1 Timothy 5 was a widow who was worthy of support by the church.
 - i) She had to have a strong spiritual testimony and be truly destitute.
 - ii) One of her qualifications was that of “having been the wife of one man” (1 Timothy 5:9).
 - b) This poses a problem for the bigamist interpretation of “the husband of one wife” phrase.
 - i) If the restriction given to bishops does not refer to serial marriage
 - ii) The widow supported by the church in her old age was required to have higher standards than the pastor of the church
- e. Considerations concerning this matter
- (1) Good men have and will continue to disagree over this matter.
 - (2) Honest differences of interpretation are possible from the text.
 - (3) Others are not responsible to you, but to God, for what they do (Romans 14:4-5).
 - (4) The choice of a pastor is between the man of God, the church that calls him, and the Lord.
4. He must be vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2).
- a. The word *vigilant* only occurs two times in scripture (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Peter 5:8), and means *to stay alert to danger or trouble*.
 - b. This quality is especially important for a pastor. He will have to protect the flock from wolves without and traitors within (Acts 20:29-30).
5. He must be sober (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).
- a. This word and its variations are used only in the New Testament, and means to be *seriously minded*.
 - b. A pastor must take his life and his service to God seriously. His calling is a holy calling, and it cannot be taken lightly.
6. He must be of good behaviour (1 Timothy 3:2).
- a. The word *behaviour* has to do with a person’s external actions.
 - b. God uses men with many different personalities, but He expects a pastor to know how to behave himself.
7. He must be given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).
- a. *Hospitality* is the act of being friendly, kind, and helpful toward others.



- b. The qualifications in Titus require the pastor to be “a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men” (Titus 1:8).
 - c. This requirement is expected of Christians in general (Romans 12:13). The widow indeed is judged by “if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet” (1 Timothy 5:10).
 - d. The pastor must be one who reaches out to others in order to strengthen them in their walk with the Lord. He must be ready to minister to their needs and show them kindness.
8. He must be apt to teach (1 Timothy 3:2).
- a. *Apt* refers to being able and willing to do something. It also means that you are inclined to do it. It comes naturally as a part of your way with others.
 - b. If the pastor is apt to teach, he must:
 - (1) Have a good knowledge of the Bible and the Christian life (Titus 1:9)
 - (2) Have an understanding of how to teach God’s truth to others
 - (3) Tend towards teaching the truth of God in many different situations
 - (4) Be patient and gentle towards others while they are learning (2 Timothy 2:24)
9. He must not be given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- a. The pastor must not be one who indulges in wine.
 - b. The point is that he must not be given to alcoholic beverages (Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 21:17; Proverbs 23:29-31).
10. He must not be a striker (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- a. Refers to those who settle disputes with physical blows
 - b. 2 Timothy 2:24-25 says, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.”
11. He must not be greedy of filthy lucre (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- a. *Lucre* refers to riches and money; compare to the related word lucrative.
 - b. The man of God must avoid the love of money (1 Timothy 6:5-10).
12. He must be patient (1 Timothy 3:3).
- a. Able to work with others at their rate of growth
 - b. To be patient with all men (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 2:24)
13. He must not be a brawler (1 Timothy 3:3).
- a. A requirement of all Christians (Titus 3:2)
 - b. Comes from the lusts of the flesh (James 4:1)
14. He must not be covetous (1 Timothy 3:3).
- a. Scriptural covetousness is not the watered down version of our day.
 - (1) It is the opposite of contentment (Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:5-10).
 - (2) It disqualifies from serving God (Exodus 18:21; 1 Timothy 3:3).
 - (3) It keeps us from obeying the commands of God (Psalm 119:36; Ezekiel 33:31; 1 Timothy 6:10).



- (4) We are not to keep company with those who do it (1 Corinthians 5:11).
 - (5) The Lord abhors those who do it (Psalm 10:3).
 - (6) Hating it prolongs days (Proverbs 28:16).
 - (7) Those who do it shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10).
 - (8) It is connected to idolatry (Ephesians 5:5).
 - b. Covetousness means to desire something so desperately that you begin to follow after it regardless of the cost. Your whole life becomes consumed with obtaining the desire of your heart.
 - c. Therefore, a pastor must not become so obsessed with anything in this world that it consumes him.
15. He must rule well his own house (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6).
- a. Having his children in subjection with all gravity (1 Timothy 3:4)
 - b. Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly (Titus 1:6)
16. He must not be a novice (1 Timothy 3:6).
- a. A novice is a beginner; one without much experience.
 - b. A novice is susceptible to being proud in his position, and falling from service to God.
 - c. No man should be put into a position of authority that has not first proven himself over a period of time.
17. He must have a good report of them that are without (1 Timothy 3:7).
- a. *Them that are without* refers to the lost (Colossians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:12)
 - b. This refers to the pastor's testimony in the world (2 Corinthians 6:3; 3 John 1:12)
18. Additional qualifications given by Titus
- a. He must be a steward (Titus 1:7).
 - (1) A steward is one who takes care of the affairs of another.
 - (2) A pastor must act as the steward of the affairs of God (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10).
 - b. He must not be self-willed (Titus 1:7).
 - c. He must not be soon angry (Titus 1:7; Proverbs 14:17; James 1:19-20).
 - d. He must be a lover of good men (Titus 1:8; Psalm 119:63; Proverbs 13:20; Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - e. He must be just (Titus 1:8).
 - (1) Specifically means to be impartial or fair; generally means to be holy or righteous.
 - (2) The pastor should have this testimony (Proverbs 20:7; Isaiah 26:7; Ezekiel 18:5-9).
 - f. He must be holy (Titus 1:8; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 1:15-16).
 - g. He must be temperate (Titus 1:8).
 - (1) Temperance is self-control over the desires of the flesh.
 - (2) Service to God requires temperance (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).
 - (3) Part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24)
 - h. He must hold fast the faithful word (Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 1:13).



C. The Responsibility of a Bishop

1. Take heed to yourselves (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:16)
 - a. In both passages, this is the first admonition listed.
 - b. Apparently, it is of the utmost importance that the man of God takes heed concerning his own walk.
 - c. This includes
 - (1) His fellowship with the Lord
 - (2) His family life
 - (3) His testimony in the world
 - (4) His testimony with the saints
2. Take heed to the flock (Acts 20:28-30)
 - a. This is both a positive and negative responsibility.
 - b. Bishops are responsible for the health of the sheep.
 - (1) They are to feed the flock (Ezekiel 34:1-3; John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).
 - (2) They are to lead the flock (1 Timothy 4:11-12; Titus 2:15; Titus 3:1).
 - c. They are responsible for the removal of wolves.
3. Take heed unto the doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16)

D. The Pitfalls of a Bishop

1. Not taking heed to himself
 - a. Spiritual problems
 - b. Personal sins
 - (1) Laziness
 - (2) Ambition
 - (3) Worldliness
 - (4) Pride
 - (5) Anger
 - (6) Gossip
 - (7) Dishonesty
 - c. Family problems
 - d. Money problems
 - e. Women problems
2. Not taking heed to the flock
3. Not taking heed to the doctrine
 - a. Lack of basic Bible knowledge (Hebrews 5:12)
 - b. Lack of solid doctrinal foundation (1 Timothy 2:15)
 - c. No plan for continued Bible learning (Jeremiah 15:16)
 - d. An inability or unwillingness to preach (2 Timothy 4:1-2)
 - e. An inability or unwillingness to teach (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
 - f. Riding a hobby-horse doctrine (1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:14-18)
 - g. Always being drawn to the new and the different (Acts 17:21)



IV. THE OFFICE OF A DEACON

A. The Office of a Deacon

1. Five Bible references (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 10, 12, 13)
2. Dictionary meaning: servant or messenger

B. The Qualifications of a Deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

1. He must be grave (1 Timothy 3:8).
 - a. The word *grave* means to be serious.
 - b. The word is probably connected to other uses of the word that are connected to death.
2. He must not be double-tongued (1 Timothy 3:8).
3. He must not be given to much wine (1 Timothy 3:8).
4. He must not be greedy of filthy lucre (1 Timothy 3:8).
5. He must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience (1 Timothy 3:9).
6. He must first be proved (1 Timothy 3:10).
7. He must have a faithful wife (1 Timothy 3:11).
 - a. She must be grave.
 - b. She must not be a slanderer.
 - c. She must be sober.
 - d. She must be faithful in all things.
8. He must be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:12).
9. He must rule his children and house well (1 Timothy 3:12).

C. The Responsibility of a Deacon

1. To serve the needs of the church
2. To serve under the leadership of the pastor since the name of the position means servant and a deacon is never called to rule as is the bishop
3. To serve according to need
 - a. Titus was not commanded to set up deacons in the churches, indicating that this was an optional position (Titus 1:5).
 - b. Acts 6:1-6, though not using the name of deacon, shows how they can be chosen and set aside for particular needs as they come up.

D. The Pitfalls of a Deacon

1. Sins of the home
2. Sins of the flesh
 - a. Gossip
 - b. Pride
 - c. Greed