

WHITE PAPER

# Elders and Deacons

## ***Biblical Foundations, Qualifications, and Governance Responsibilities for the Two Primary Church Offices***

*Contributed by Todd Bussey, Ministry Advisor*

*The offices of Elder and Deacon are the two primary offices of the local church, described in detail in the New Testament and carried forward through nearly two thousand years of church history. Their qualifications, responsibilities, and accountability relationships are not incidental to church governance; they are foundational to it.*

*This paper provides a biblically grounded and practically structured framework for understanding the roles of Elders and Deacons, how they relate to one another and to the Lead Pastor, how churches identify and affirm individuals for these offices, and how the Elder Board functions as a governing body. It is written for church leaders, elder boards, and those who are developing or reviewing their governance structures.*

*This paper is part of the Stewardship Advisors library on church governance and organizational health. It is designed to be read alongside *The Three-Board Church* and the *Choosing Your Church Governance Structure Reference Guide*.*

## Introduction

### *The Weight of the Calling*

Spiritual leadership is not a title or a role that a church assigns to capable volunteers. It is a calling with weight, accountability, and consequence. Scripture is direct about this. James writes: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). The heightened accountability that accompanies spiritual leadership is not a deterrent. It is a description of the stakes.

The history of Scripture illustrates those stakes clearly. King Saul's disobedience led to his rejection and to turmoil for the nation he was called to lead (1 Samuel 15:26-29). Eli's failure to address the corruption within his own household diminished the spiritual health of Israel and brought severe consequences upon his family (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25). These are not cautionary footnotes. They are the record of what happens when leaders in positions of spiritual authority fail to exercise it with integrity.

The same principle operates in the New Testament context. The qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are not aspirational ideals. They are the standards against which a church evaluates whether an individual is prepared to bear the weight of the Elder or Deacon office. Getting this right is foundational, not to organizational efficiency, but to congregational health.

*When hands are laid on a new Elder, he steps into a line of ordained leadership that extends back nearly two thousand years to the apostolic church. When that Elder later lays hands on the next generation, he is ensuring that the Kingdom of God is being well stewarded until Christ returns.*

## Part One: The Foundation of Spiritual Leadership

### *The character, integrity, and moral authority required of those who lead the church*

### Scriptural Foundations

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The biblical model for church leadership holds two offices in view: the Elder, who bears governance and spiritual oversight responsibility, and the Deacon, who bears responsibility for practical service. These are not interchangeable roles. Each carries distinct authority, distinct accountability, and distinct qualifications.

Elders are described throughout the New Testament as the moral and spiritual compass of the congregation. The terms "Elder" and "overseer" are used interchangeably in passages such as 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, where the qualifications for the office are laid out in detail. Elders are called to teach, to shepherd, to exercise discernment, and to provide unified governance for the congregation. Their authority is collective, not individual. The New Testament pattern is a plurality of Elders providing oversight together, presenting a unified mind and spirit to the congregation.

Deacons serve a different but equally essential function. The office traces to Acts 6:1-6, where the early church appointed seven men "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" to address practical needs within the congregation, freeing the apostles to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word. The Deacon office is not a lesser form of Elder authority. It is a distinct office with its own qualifications, its own accountability, and its own contribution to the health of the church.

# The Moral Authority Requirement

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The nature of church leadership transcends skill or competence. Unlike the private sector, where an individual may be highly effective professionally while maintaining a complicated personal life, that separation is incompatible with spiritual leadership. Elders and Deacons are called to embody the character of Christ in how they manage themselves, their families, and their engagement with the broader community.

First Timothy 3:4-5 makes the connection explicit: an Elder must manage his own household well, with children who are respectful and obedient. The implication is clear. A leader's capacity to govern within the church is tied directly to their demonstrated ability to lead within their family. This is not an arbitrary standard. It is a test of whether the character required for spiritual leadership is actually present in the person's life.

James 1:22 instructs leaders to "be doers of the word, and not hearers only." Colossians 3:23-24 calls leaders to "work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." These are not general Christian virtues. They are specific expectations for those who hold positions of spiritual authority. True authority in the church is rooted in a leader's personal relationship with Jesus and their commitment to living a life that aligns with what they teach.

*The congregational trust that makes spiritual leadership possible is not granted by a vote or an ordination. It is earned through a demonstrated life. The qualifications Scripture sets for Elders and Deacons are not a checklist. They are a character description.*

## Part Two: The Elder Office

*Role, governance responsibilities, selection process, and relationship to the Lead Pastor*

### The Role of Elders

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Elders hold the primary governance and spiritual oversight responsibility of the local church. They operate in plurality, ensuring that all aspects of church life function within a moral framework aligned with Scripture. As Acts 14:23 records, the early church established Elders in every congregation to provide leadership and care. This collaborative model draws on diverse perspectives and wisdom, and it protects the congregation from the vulnerabilities of concentrated single-leader authority.

Among the primary responsibilities of the Elder Board is the oversight of the Lead Pastor. Elders are called to champion the pastor's vision while also evaluating his work honestly and holding him accountable (1 Timothy 5:17). This dual role, encouragement and accountability together, is not a contradiction. It is the fullness of what biblical oversight requires.

Elders serve as the primary governance body of the church, meeting regularly to ensure that the church and its staff are operating in health and alignment with the mission. When concerns arise that may disqualify a leader from service, it is the responsibility of the Elder Board to execute a thoughtful and compassionate plan for addressing those concerns, including the possibility of dismissal and the pursuit of spiritual restoration where appropriate (Galatians 6:1).

Elders are also accessible to the congregation, welcoming concerns and affirmations with discernment. Scripture cautions against accepting accusations without multiple credible sources (1 Timothy 5:19). This discernment creates an environment of trust: the congregation knows that Elders will take concerns seriously without being swayed by gossip or unfounded claims.

Above all, Elders are men of prayer and the Word. Their reliance on God's guidance through prayer (Philippians 4:6-7) and their commitment to Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17) are the foundation of every governance decision they make.

## Identification, Affirmation, Training, and Ordination

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The Scriptural qualifications for Elders are laid out primarily in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They emphasize moral integrity, household management, the ability to teach, sound doctrine, and a good reputation with those outside the church. These qualifications are not minimums to be met once. They describe the ongoing character of the man who holds the office.

### Criteria for Selection

The process of identifying Elder candidates should be annual and structured. A designated window of time each year allows the existing board to deliberate on potential candidates and gives the congregation an opportunity to offer input. The congregation should be provided with the scriptural qualifications for the office so that their suggestions are grounded in the biblical criteria rather than personal affinity.

Recommendations from the congregation are reviewed by the Elder Board, which evaluates each candidate prayerfully against the biblical criteria. The board also determines the number of candidates needed based on current composition and anticipated rotations.

A candidate who is identified will be approached and asked to prayerfully consider the opportunity. Scripture teaches that a man must first aspire to this role (1 Timothy 3:1). He will be given the written qualifications and expectations of the office, allowing him to assess his own readiness honestly. He will then meet with several Elders for further conversation before being presented to the congregation.

Scripture cautions against being hasty in laying on of hands (1 Timothy 5:22). The Deacon function often serves as a natural context for observing potential Elder candidates who are newer to the congregation or whose spiritual maturity is still being established.

### Affirmation, Ordination, and Service Rotation

- A.** Affirmation: Following the Elder Board's evaluation, the candidate is presented to the congregation for affirmation at the annual congregational meeting. This is not a democratic vote but a corporate acknowledgment. The overall sense of the congregation should align with the Elders' assessment.
- B.** Training: Training for Elders encompasses both theological orientation and practical preparation. Mentorship by senior Elders, engagement with the governing documents, participation in board meetings as a learner, and relevant study all contribute to readiness. Ongoing training ensures Elders remain equipped for the responsibilities they carry.
- C.** Ordination: Ordination is a significant public recognition of the Elder's calling and commitment. First Timothy 4:14 identifies the laying on of hands as the practice that publicly marks the beginning of this service: "Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you." This act connects the new Elder to the long line of ordained leaders stretching back to the apostolic church.
- D.** Service Rotation: Elders serve on the operational board for defined terms, rotating off on a scheduled basis. The mantle of Elder is a lifetime calling, but service on the governing board is a rotating function. This structure prevents burnout, ensures fresh perspectives, and maintains accountability within the board itself.

## Continuous Accountability

Given the spiritual significance of the Elder office and the attention that enemy forces direct at church leadership, Elders are called to live in high mutual accountability with one another. This means transparency about personal struggles, willingness to examine one another's lives, and the humility to step aside if one's own conduct is placing the integrity of the board at risk.

First Corinthians 10:12-13 is instructive: "If you think you are standing strong, be careful, for you too may fall into the same sin." An Elder who recognizes that he may be compromising his calling should be the first to name it, confess it to his fellow Elders, and take whatever action the situation requires. The foremost concern of the Elder Board is the health of the body of Christ.

## Functions of the Working Elder Board

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The size and structure of the Elder Board will vary with the size and complexity of the church. At minimum, the board should consist of at least four members, including the Lead Pastor, who also serves as an Elder. State requirements for nonprofit governance typically require at least two Elders to serve concurrently in trustee and treasurer roles.

### Meeting Frequency and Structure

Elders should meet no less than once per month. Regular meetings allow the board to review ministry activity, financial position, and operational health. The meeting structure should be documented for accountability and consistency. An Elder Chair should be appointed to call meetings and to collaborate with the Lead Pastor in building the agenda. Facilitation responsibilities may be shared between the Chair and the Lead Pastor by mutual agreement.

### Oversight and Governance

The Elder Board operates within an "Elder-protected, staff-led" structure. The church staff reports to the Lead Pastor, who reports to the Elder Board. This structure ensures that the Elders exercise oversight at the governance level without crossing into operational management. Hebrews 13:17 establishes the accountability of spiritual leaders: "Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God."

To exercise meaningful oversight, Elders need access to information that goes beyond what the Lead Pastor provides in board meetings. The following practices support a robust and accountable oversight function:

- Regular staff participation: Invite ministry staff leaders to participate in Elder meetings on a rotational basis, allowing the board to hear directly from those involved in day-to-day ministry.
- Independent conversations: Elders should seek opportunities to connect individually with staff members outside of formal settings, gathering diverse perspectives without creating an adversarial dynamic.
- Established feedback channels: Create structured mechanisms through which staff can share observations about the health of the ministry, giving Elders context they would not otherwise have.

These accountability practices should be transparent and agreed upon by the Lead Pastor and the Elder Board. Unilateral investigation without the Lead Pastor's knowledge undermines trust. Structured accountability with the Lead Pastor's participation builds it.

### Decision-Making

Decisions by the Elder Board should be consensus-based. Unity of spirit is not simply a governance preference; it reflects the biblical expectation that the Elder Board operates as a unified governing body (Philippians 2:1-2). This

does not mean that disagreement is suppressed. It means that the board commits to deliberating until it reaches a position it can hold together.

## The Relationship of the Elder Board to the Lead Pastor

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The Lead Pastor serves as an Elder among Elders, holding a distinctive place at the table by virtue of his theological training, his paid employment by the church, and his day-to-day proximity to all aspects of church life. He brings information and perspective that the board cannot access without him. The board brings accountability and oversight that the Lead Pastor cannot provide for himself.

The Elder Board's role is to ensure that the Lead Pastor fulfills his assignment while also giving him a strong voice in guiding the church's direction. Proverbs 15:22 frames this well: "Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success." The Lead Pastor should experience the Elder Board not as a check on his leadership but as a structure that strengthens it.

The board's accountability function includes regular attention to the Lead Pastor's spiritual and emotional health, not only his ministry performance. This includes the provision of sabbatical rest, support for professional development, fair and documented compensation, and consistent communication that the board stands behind him and his leadership.

The Lead Pastor, for his part, should include the Elders in strategic planning and vision-setting, provide regular progress reports on major initiatives, and maintain transparency about the full state of church operations. The accountability relationship functions in both directions: the board is accountable to the Lead Pastor for its support, and the Lead Pastor is accountable to the board for his conduct and his work.

### The Elder Board's Accountability to the Lead Pastor

The accountability relationship between the Elder Board and the Lead Pastor is sometimes described as if it flows only one direction. The Elders hold the Lead Pastor accountable. That is accurate but incomplete.

The Elder Board is equally obligated to provide the Lead Pastor with what he needs to lead well: clarity of expectations, honest feedback, fair compensation, pastoral care for his own spiritual health, and the confidence that the board is unified behind him. First Thessalonians 5:12-13 makes the call explicit: "Honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work."

An Elder Board that holds the Lead Pastor accountable without providing this support has misunderstood its own role.

## Part Three: The Deacon Office

*Role, servant ministry scope, selection process, and a note on deaconesses*

### The Role of Deacons

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Deacons are not a lower tier of elder authority. They are the holders of a distinct office with its own qualifications, its own accountability, and its own contribution to the life of the church. This distinction matters. A Deacon Board that operates as a second governing body, exercising authority over ministry direction or challenging the Elder Board's governance decisions, has fundamentally misunderstood the office it holds.

The biblical foundation for the deacon office is Acts 6:1-6, where the early church faced a practical crisis: the needs of Hellenistic widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. The apostles' response was to appoint seven men "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" to oversee the practical ministry, freeing the apostles to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word. The office was created to serve, not to govern.

In practice, deacon responsibilities encompass a wide range of servant-ministry functions: facility care and maintenance, congregational care, outreach coordination, family and student ministry support, hospitality, benevolence, and the pastoral support of church members facing practical needs. Deacons lead volunteers within their areas of responsibility and serve as the front-facing representatives of the church's care for its people.

Galatians 6:2 captures the spirit of the office: Deacons help "bear one another's burdens," fostering a culture of love and mutual support. James 2:14-17 reinforces the theological weight of this work: faith without works is not complete faith. Deacons make the church's faith visible through tangible acts of care and service.

The deacon office is also integral to leadership development. Deacons serve as an effective breeding ground for identifying and preparing future Elders, giving the congregation a structured context in which potential elder candidates can demonstrate their character, their ministry capacity, and their commitment before being considered for the governance office.

*The Deacon Board is not the Elder Board's junior governance partner. It is a distinct office with its own biblical mandate: servant ministry, not governing authority. The health of the three-board model depends on each office staying within its own lane.*

## Identification, Training, and Appointment

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The qualifications for Deacons are outlined primarily in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3. The emphasis is on character, integrity, and spiritual seriousness: well-respected, not given to dishonesty or excess, committed to sound doctrine, and living with a clear conscience. Deacons must also manage their households well.

- A.** Criteria for Selection: Deacons should exhibit strong character and a genuine commitment to serving others. They should be well-respected within the congregation, trustworthy, and demonstrably motivated by the mission of the church rather than personal influence or recognition. Lives of integrity, humility, and spiritual growth are the baseline expectation.
- B.** Training: Deacons receive training and preparation suited to their area of ministry responsibility. The Lead Pastor directs their work and ensures they have access to the resources, mentorship, and practical experience needed to serve effectively. Training may include workshops, individual mentoring, and structured exposure to ministry operations.
- C.** Appointment: Deacons are appointed by the Lead Pastor and affirmed by the Elder Board. They are recognized before the congregation for prayer and public affirmation, but they are not voted upon by the congregation. This process reflects the spiritual nature of the calling: it is not a democratic selection but a discerned appointment.
- D.** Service Terms: Deacons serve on an annual basis and may be reappointed if they continue to serve effectively and express a desire to continue. Annual terms allow the church to revisit the fit between the individual and the role without the awkwardness of an indefinite appointment.

## **A Note on Deaconesses**

First Timothy 3:11 refers to "women" (Greek: gynaikas) in the context of the deacon qualifications, and Romans 16:1 identifies Phoebe as a diakonon (the same Greek term used for male deacons) of the church at Cenchreae. These passages have generated substantive theological discussion across church traditions regarding whether the deacon office is open to women.

Three positions are commonly held. Some traditions understand 1 Timothy 3:11 as referring to the wives of deacons, not to a separate office of women deacons. Others hold that the passage describes a recognized category of women deacons or deaconesses, a role with historical precedent in the early church. A third position understands the deacon office as restricted to men on the basis of the overall context of 1 Timothy 3.

This is a matter on which theologically serious churches disagree. What is clear is that the question should be addressed explicitly rather than assumed, and that the church's position should be stated in its governing documents. A church that has not defined its position is not neutral; it is simply unprepared for the conversation when it arises.

Stewardship Advisors does not prescribe a position on this question. We do advise that the position be deliberate, documented, and consistently applied.

## **Support, Oversight, and Conflict Resolution**

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While the Lead Pastor oversees the day-to-day work of the Deacon Board, the Elder Board provides the governance framework within which deacons operate. In situations where conflict among staff, deacons, or congregants reaches an impasse that the Lead Pastor cannot resolve, the Elders may be called upon to provide wisdom and guidance.

The Elder Board's role in these situations is not coercive. Ephesians 4:1-3 establishes the spirit in which conflicts are addressed: "Lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace." There is no strong-arm approach within the Elder Board; there is instead a moral structure that expects the church to operate at a high level of integrity and mutual care.

## **Conclusion**

### **Offices in Service of Mission**

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The roles of Elder and Deacon are not governance architecture for its own sake. They are the structural expression of the church's commitment to being led well, served faithfully, and held accountable across generations.

Elders and Deacons are the front-facing witness of the church's integrity, the protectors of its spiritual health, and the primary developers of the next generation of leaders. They are disciples who make disciples, fully committed to the pathway of Christ and eager to pass the mantle of faithful leadership to those who follow.

As Matthew 28:19-20 charges: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." That charge is not simply programmatic. It is structural. Elders and Deacons who hold their offices with integrity build institutions capable of fulfilling it across generations.

*The faithful service of Elders and Deacons does not simply sustain the church in the present. It lays the foundation on which the church will stand in the future.*

## Appendix A: Key New Testament Scriptures on Biblical Leadership

### 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NLT)

*"This is a trustworthy saying: If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position. So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? An elder must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap."*

### Titus 1:5-9 (NLT)

*"I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you. An elder must live a blameless life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who don't have a reputation for being wild or rebellious. A church leader is a manager of God's household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or dishonest with money. Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong."*

### 1 Peter 5:2-3 (NLT)

*"Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly, not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example."*

### Hebrews 13:17 (NLT)

*"Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit."*

### James 3:1 (NLT)

*"Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly."*

### Matthew 20:26-28 (NLT)

*"But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

### Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

*"Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ."*

## **Colossians 3:23-24 (NLT)**

*"Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ."*

# Appendix B: Qualifications of Elders and Deacons

## Qualifications of Elders

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### **1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NLT)**

*"This is a trustworthy saying: If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position. So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? An elder must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap."*

### **Titus 1:5-9 (NLT)**

*"I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you. An elder must live a blameless life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who don't have a reputation for being wild or rebellious. A church leader is a manager of God's household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or dishonest with money. Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong."*

### **1 Peter 5:1-3 (NLT)**

*"And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches: I too am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I too will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly, not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example."*

## Qualifications of Deacons

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### **1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NLT)**

*"In the same way, deacons must be well-respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and household well. Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus."*

### **Acts 6:3 (NLT)**

*"And so, brothers, select seven men who are well-respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility."*

These passages provide the primary biblical criteria for the qualifications of Elders and Deacons: character, integrity, household leadership, sound doctrine, and a reputation that reflects well on the church and its Lord.

### **Related Resources from Stewardship Advisors**

This white paper is part of the Stewardship Advisors library on church governance and organizational health. Readers working through questions of elder and deacon governance will find additional depth in the following resources:

- The Three-Board Church (White Paper): the governance structure that separates Elder, Deacon, and Trustee authority and the institutional benefits of maintaining those distinctions
- Choosing Your Church Governance Structure (Thought Leadership Series): an overview of the three defining governance variables and six primary governance models
- Before You Present an Elder (Reference Guide): a comprehensive framework for the elder identification, evaluation, and ordination process
- Before You Start a Deacon Ministry (Reference Guide): structural clarity, accountability design, and scope definition for the deacon office
- The Church Constitution and Bylaws (Reference Guide): what governing documents must contain to define and protect the elder and deacon offices across generations

All resources are available at [stewardshipadvisors.co/resources](https://stewardshipadvisors.co/resources)