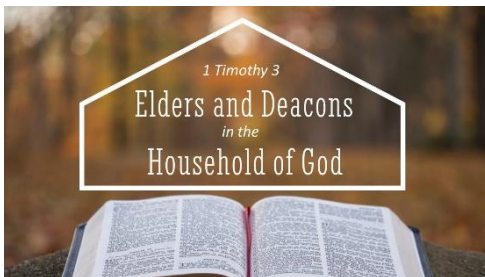


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The Vital Roles of Elders & Deacons in Proper Stewardship and Governance of the Local Church



God has ordained certain justified men to serve and manage the church. Moses was told by Jethro that he should have responsible and God-fearing men who would co-labour with him at different levels to be more effective in the service for the Lord (Exo 18:14-22). **Both elders and deacons play important roles in the governance and ministry of the local church, working together with the minister of the gospel as ordained of the Lord to build up the flock in the fear and knowledge of the Lord.**

The Place of Elders

Paul tells Titus to ordain elders in every city (Tit 1:5; Acts 14:22). There is the Greek word "*presbuteroi*" from which we get the word "Presbyterian." We are a Bible Presbyterian Church and according to God's Word, we have the rulership by the plurality of elders in our midst.

In 1 Tim 3:1-7, Paul talks about bishops or overseers, or "*episkopoi*" (see Reinecker, linguistic key to the Greek New Testament), he means the same thing when he uses the word "*presbuteroi*," or elders (notice the plural form of it). The elder and bishop are not two different offices. What then are the roles of the elders?

Essentially, there are 3 main roles:

1. **They are to protect the flock from error and falsehood and teach sound doctrine and be involved in the spiritual nurture of the flock.** In Acts 20:17, we see Paul addressing the elders of the church in Ephesus. He places upon them the responsibility to defend the flock against the onslaught of doctrinal deviation and the confusion of the day. In Acts 20:30-32, he says, '*Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I*

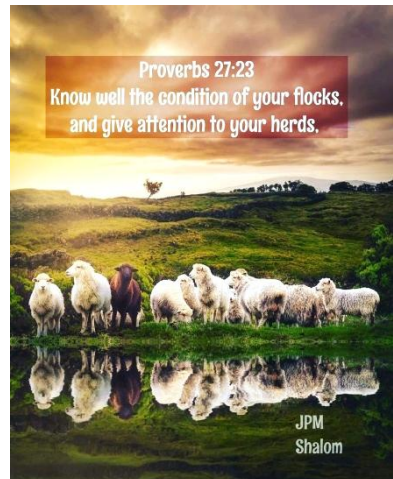
commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.'

John Watkins, a 19th century pastor who wrote his *A Hand-Book for Ruling Elders*, published at Richmond in 1895 by the Committee of Publication of the Southern Presbyterian Church, says that "an elder should be *"apt to teach* (1 Tim 3:2). The reference is not necessarily to public and official instruction. There must be, however, some faculty for the communication of knowledge. It is important that our elders should use every opportunity within their reach to store their minds with religious knowledge. They should be faithful and prayerful students of God's Word, so that they may be able to work efficiently in the Bible class, and guide inquirers intelligently. They should study carefully the standards of the church, and be able to explain the scriptural grounds of Presbyterianism. **Soundness in the faith is an important qualification. The churches which were planted and nourished by the apostles began to deteriorate very soon after their death, and errors of all kinds crept in through false teachers.** The rapid departure of some of the apostolic churches from the simplicity which is in Christ and from purity of doctrine clearly shows the necessity of having sound and orthodox rulers."

The elders are to take diligent heed unto the doctrine and conduct, in keeping out the wolves from the sheepfold of the Lord and in admonishing and reproving disorderly persons for their edification.

It is the duty of the elder to look after the spiritual interests of the flock, and to do everything in their power to ensure that they are well cared for spiritually.

John Watkins also stressed well here that it is the duty of the elders to visit the members of his church. It is impossible for them to take proper oversight over them, look after their spiritual interests, and give them due attention, without coming in personal contact with them in their homes. He added that it is especially incumbent upon elders to visit the sick, the afflicted, and the poor. *"Is any sick among you, let them call for the elders of the church, and let them pray,"* etc. **The elder, besides giving spiritual comfort, may sometimes find it in his power to render aid in temporal respects, or induce others to do so who have the ability. It is duty of elders to give careful and earnest attention to the backsliding members of their flock.** The very name ruling elder implies the specialty of this obligation. This is consistent with James 4:14-16 that if members are sick, they are to inform their elders who will pray for them with care and concern.



2. **The elders have a role in the proper governance of the church. There are ruling and teaching elders who provide the spiritual oversight of the flock and make important decisions on behalf of the church** after much prayer in consultation with God and the session. Prov 27:23 says, *'Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.'*
3. **The ruling elders of the church have an important duty in maintaining the discipline of the church.** The elders of the church are responsible to ensure that unruly or disorderly persons do not disrupt the ministry for the church. And if there are doctrinal aberrations, they are also to address it in a biblical manner; without prejudice; with justice and judgment of God, **to avoid the spread of heresy, unbiblical teachings, doctrines and practices within the church (Tit 3:8-10). This requires godly prudence and discretion and the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:22; 1 Tim 1:19-20).**

1 Pet 5:2-4 says, *'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.'* Elders are accountable to God on the day of judgment before the judgment seat of Christ in the manner they rule and govern the flock under their charge (2 Cor 5:10).

The Place and Qualities of Deacons in the Church

We thank God for the nominated and elected office bearers in our church who have been serving God in an exemplary manner in Sovereign Hope BP Church over a number of years. **A deacon is an important figure in the early church; in Acts 6:1-9 they assisted the apostles in the serving of tables. They are also visible officials of the church and there are certain qualities mentioned in the bible about them.** Below is a brief explanation and elaboration of some of the qualities of deacons from 1 Tim 3:8-13.

1. **"Grave" (or "Sober").** The deacon must be a man of dignity, worthy of respect, sober and grave and not given to a frivolous and flippant disposition. The world thrives on light-hearted temporal vanities, but the deacon is concerned about things eternal. Serious Christian demeanour and gravity is a warm, attractive attribute flowing from the fear of God and is a rare but requisite quality today.
2. **"Not double tongued."** He has the integrity of speech and is sincere and honest. He means what he says and says what he means. You can depend on his word: he says what he means, means what he says and does not prevaricate from the truth. Truthfulness is a prerequisite to the diaconal office.
3. **"Not given to much wine."** The deacon is to develop self-control or temperance and be disciplined in his life. He carries himself well and is not given to excesses. He does not drink alcohol nor is he addicted in any way. The Bible has many warnings against the potential dangers of wine and strong drink (Isa 5:11, 22; Prov 20:1; 23:30-35; Hos 4:11). If a deacon had a drinking problem, he would be a bad testimony and would lead others astray on this matter and bring reproach to the name of Christ. No man can have two masters and be effective to the Lord and he is temperate and wise in all things.

4. *"Not guilty of filthy lucre."* He is honest and trustworthy to serve the Lord in an acceptable manner. Those charged with handling the church's money must be free from the love of it. Many financial decisions and other practical matters handled by the deacons must be made before God through much prayer and by faith. The deacons, then, must be more than faithful and reliable trustees or stewards, worthy of the trust of the members in the church. They must have personal faith in God and understand the spiritual aspects of the stewardship of church finance or the church missions programme. Churches can be hindered from supporting missionaries or doing things other than that which God was directing them to do simply because of the lack of God-honouring stewards. The Bible has warnings and examples against people who used their office to achieve financial gain at the expense of others (Num 22-44; 1 Sam 2:13-17; 2 Kings 5:20-27; Isa 22:15-25). A candidate for the diaconal ministry has to be screened for financial integrity before he can be appointed or elected.
5. *"Holds the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."* His profession of the Christian faith is characterized by a clean and undefiled conscience as the Spirit leads him. Conscience is a moral agent that God has instituted in every man and it can be defiled or seared with a hot iron if one is not careful to heed its promptings (Rom 2:15-16). As the conscience can be God's agent for guiding and judging, it should be kept in a clean and undefiled form. The godly deacon is not a hypocrite but sincere and faithful. He should strive to please God in all that he does and to maintain a good conscience before God and men. This Pauline qualification for deacons cannot be compromised. What is this "mystery of the faith?" It refers to the objective and distinctive truths of the Christian faith that is revealed to believers by God through His Word. Alexander Strauch, "The great truths of the faith are not to be held as theological abstractions but are to be properly employed in daily life. **To hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience will give no cause for condemnation. Therefore, there is an awesome responsibility for deacons to live out these truths consistently and obediently in their lives as a prerequisite to the diaconal office.**"
6. *"Found blameless."* While he is not perfect, he has to be tested first to determine that he is not a novice (i.e., new convert), one who is rapidly elevated to office in his tender faith. Paul tells Timothy, to *'lay hands suddenly on no man'* (1 Tim 5:22). The deacon is a man who has proved his worth in the life of the church, whose spirituality and maturity are evident to all; and he is to strive to be "beyond reproach."

A deacon is also to be a good manager of his home. The deacon must be "one wife's husband" (i.e. he is faithful in the marriage bond), and he must be a good manager of his own household. His children do not behave unruly; he keeps his children under good parental guidance with all dignity. **Church leaders are required to keep their children and spouse under their control with honour and dignity and to be the head of the house.** The apostle adds significantly that if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God (1 Tim 3:5)? Notice that God requires that the deacon be a man who rules his household "well." He must be a godly, biblical father and husband with a good family life. God gives a reasonable standard for the church officer. His home is where he is in charge

as the head of the home. **If a man cannot guide and manage his own home properly, he has no business trying to guide the flock of God in a local church.** Any serious problems in the home should be resolved before a man is considered for a responsible church office. Therefore, the home is a good test case **if the man can effectively render spiritually edifying services to the people of God in the church.**

The deacon should be teachable and diligent and be able to communicate biblical truths clearly to others if necessary. The deacon needs to be careful not only in the dynamics of his teaching but also spiritual sensitivity to other people in the church. He needs to serve God and his people with a meek and gentle spirit. He recognizes that he should seek to diligently study the Word of God and know it well and apply it in his life before teaching others (2 Tim 2:15; Ezra 7:10).

John Calvin, the French Reformer identified two diaconal functions: administration of benevolence and personal care for the needy, tasks he believed were scripturally assigned to godly men (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13; 5:9, 10; Rom 12:8). Deacons are effectual assistants to the minister of the church. Deacons do not preach or administer the sacraments

independently but may appropriately assist in it and collect the offering and offer physical or spiritual help to members, as expressions of the spiritual character of their charitable ministry. Calvin insisted that the office of deacons is permanently necessary for right church order. (Donald K McKim and David F Wright, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1992, 96.)



There are many avenues of service that require the help of deacons in the local church. From the chairing of a service to the teaching of a Sunday School class; ushering and PA work or welcoming visitors; physical or menial work; church administration and maintenance of the church premise; the visitation of the sick and needy; ministry to both young and old - all are relevant duties of a responsible deacon.

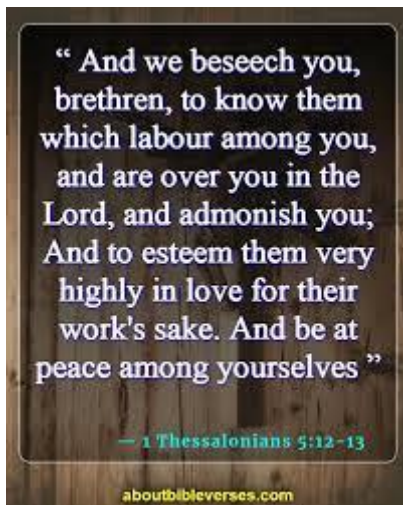
Faithful deacons who have been serving in the church are to be given a place of honour and influence within that redeemed community. Paul said in 1 Tim 3:13, *'For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.'*

Paul has a commendable word for deacons here. The deacon as stated by Paul is to gain boldness or confidence in the faith and to be highly regarded by the congregation. Deacons are to be faithful and effective stewards for God. They are to influence the people in their faith and attitude towards God by their conduct and example. Diligent and responsible deacons have a vital role and place in the spiritual health and vitality of the local church. 1Thes 5:12-13 says, *'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be*

at peace among yourselves.' Members are to pray for them and treat them with respect, encouraging them in the good work that they are doing.

Conclusion

Christ our Lord is ultimately the Head of the church, and we are just unprofitable servants of the Most High God. It is both an honour and a grave duty to serve the living and true God and we covet your prayers and cooperation for the officer bearers of the church including your elders and deacons. Hebrews 13:17 says, *'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.'* Let us hold them in love and honour; take their ministry seriously; respond to them with respect; accept their assistance with appreciation. **Support them in prayer and encourage them with your testimony and words that we may together build up a God honouring church to the glory of His name.** Hebrews 6:10 says, *'For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.'*



Jack Sin

(NB. For deeper studies, read Alexander Strauch, ***Minister of Mercy - The New Testament Deacon***, 1992 and Richard Swartley, ***Eldership in Action - Through Biblical Governance of the Church***, 2005 and <http://www.westminsterconfession.org/the-church/the-duties-and-qualifications-of-ruling-elders.php>, 2010.)

Church Family Day
9 Aug 2025
@ Labrador Park



Memory Verse

1Thes 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund.
2. Dr Andy McIntosh brings us God's Word this morning on "***Divine Imperatives to All Christians (1Thes 5:12-28)***", continuing the new quarterly series on "***Sacred Meditations on Christ and the Coming of the Anti-Christ (1 & 2 Thess)***".
3. Next Sunday, Pastor will bring us God's Word on "***Be Worthy of His Calling (2Thes 1:1-12)***".
4. **Special Seminar** on "***The Wonder of the Human Voice***" by Dr Andy McIntosh after the refreshments this morning.
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We have systematic studies on New Testament Foundations and the Psalms. [Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode: 218178].
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church. [Zoom ID:863 7527 5431 Passcode: 625551].
7. SHBPC Annual Congregation Meeting cum Election will be held on **Sun 31 Aug 2025** after the worship service. All members are to pray and attend.
8. Pray for:
 - **Travel:** Ps Babu [26/8, Bangalore], **Dr Sam** [26/8, Wenzhou],
 - **Church ACM cum Elections on 31 Aug**
 - **Medical:** **Pit Yuen** [Ongoing radiotherapy from 19/8], **Agnes' Parents** [health & salvation], **Mrs Philip Heng** [stroke recovery]
 - **Joseph & Rachel:** GPS Outreach at Ang Mo Kio
 - **Lily Almon:** Singapore Citizenship Application
 - **John Almon:** Application for course at Nanyang Polytechnic
 - **Bangalore Mission Trip [11-15 Dec]:** Pastor, Dn Yue Kay, John W, Shaun & Zoey (Brunei)
9. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

Kindly indicate "**Church Building Fund**" if you would like to designate towards this cause.