

Leaders Who Serve

**A Handbook and Statement of Philosophy for
Church Organization and Leadership**

Name

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Chapter One

The Ministry of the Church

The church is not a building. For many, such a statement is shocking. They have been conditioned to think of the church in terms of brick and mortar, stained glass and pipe organs. But the church, the true church, is not an address. When Jesus declared, "*I will build My church*" (Matt. 15:18), He was not planning to become a construction contractor. The expressed intent was to build His church, but not in the way we commonly think. Indeed, Jesus had an *organism in mind*, not an organization. The difference is fundamental and critical.

Today there are many voices that declare to us how to build the church organization. These leaders tell us how to increase our Sunday School enrollment, raise our level of giving, pay for a new building, establish new programs, enlist workers and so forth. The advice is not all bad, in fact it can be quite helpful.

Unfortunately, however, too many church leaders see such tasks as the chief purpose, even the reason for existence, of the local church. In these people's minds the true task of church leadership is to build and maintain the organization, not feed and nurture the organism. *Far* too often, the result is a cold, impersonal structure where organizational goals are far more important than the tender care of people.

Ultimately, in such an environment, achievements become more crucial than maturity. On the other hand, if the impersonal pitfall is avoided, other churches may tend toward a crude, religious carnival atmosphere. Here, the church provides spectacular "*shows*" and innovative gimmicks to bolster attendance, participation and growth. A smorgasbord of activity clouds the fact that the church is so busy engaging in events, that it has little time to equip believers for life and ministry. While this type of ministry may be broad and entertaining, it is often shallow *and* ineffective.

The church of the *New Testament* was vibrant and alive. For example, note this description of that body. *"And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles"* (Acts 2:42-43).

The lives of people were being radically transformed by the Person of Christ. Every believer was an active participator in the ministry of the early church. The effect was astounding. *"And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith"* (Acts 6:7).

Regardless how the twentieth century church is named, described, organized or structured, there is one non-negotiable, *Biblical* principle that must under gird all of the Church's activity. It must minister to the spiritual needs of people. Whatever else may be accomplished, however good it may be, the local body of believers must evidence interpersonal ministry within the church. Until this issue is addressed and embraced by the leadership of the church, all other activity, however sincere, is short of the mark. If a man aspires to leadership in he is committing himself to a ministry-oriented leadership that will require spiritual maturity, a servant's heart and diligent effort.

Leadership in this body is not to be passive. We are not overlords or corporate directors. We are, however, servants to Christ and His people. Our desire as leaders is summarized by the Apostle Paul. *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ"* (I Cor. 11:1).

Before the biblical principles for the offices of elder and deacon are addressed, it is proper that the leadership reconsider the basic thrust of the church. If we do not know *what our* Biblical goals are, then as leaders of the church, we have no sure direction apart from the opinions of men. Therefore, in broad strokes, the ministry of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is outlined.

First, the essential biblical principles of church ministry are discussed.

Second, the application of these principles to our church structure is suggested.

Finally, the purpose of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is given.

Principles

The Biblical principles for the ministry of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church are discussed in the *Discovery Series: A Membership Study Guide*. What follows is a restatement of our Biblical philosophy of ministry. It is absolutely essential that the leadership of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church be thoroughly familiar, conversant, and, most importantly, in complete agreement with these principles. A continual review of the *Discovery Series* would be beneficial for all church officers.

The Ultimate Goal of the Church

When all considerations are put into an eternal perspective, what is the broad, comprehensive goal of the church? The great theologian, C.H. Hodge, noted, "*the final cause of God's purpose is His own glory*" (Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:535). This is supported in Scripture in passages like Isaiah 42:8 (cf. also Isa. 48:11). "*I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.*" According to the psalmist, "*The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands*" (Psalm 19:1). God both desires and demands that His creation glorify Him. The church, then, composed of redeemed believers, must also glorify (magnify, honor, enhance the reputation of) *God*.

This is the fundamental, ultimate goal of the church, the body of believers. "*In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory*" (Eph. 1:11-12, NIV). No wonder, then, that the Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian church (and us as well), "...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). Not only should a *New Testament* church glorify God in all that it does, there are three specific objectives that must be addressed. The accomplishment these God-directed objectives will insure the spiritual health of the church and, thereby, bring honor to the name of Christ

Three Objectives of the Church

The first objective is to evangelize the unbeliever. This was certainly characteristic of the New Testament Church. *"And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as Christ" (Acts 5:42).* But it's more than simply an historical notation. Note the passionate plea of the Apostle Paul and its timely relevance for us today. *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."* Whether we view evangelism in terms of Christ's mission *"to seek and save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10) or the church's commission to *"go therefore and make disciples"* (Matt. 28:19), one issue is clear. Leading men and women to put their faith and trust in Christ is a prime objective of the church. We may not be comfortable with the demands of evangelism. We may even be hesitant in our personal lives, but the teaching is clear. Evangelism is a prime objective of the church.

The second objective is to edify or build up the believers. Once a person has experienced the regenerating, new birth, he must begin the lifelong process of growth to maturity. The end product of church ministry is to produce mature, stable believers who can find their appropriate place of service within the body of Christ. As Peter exhorts us, so appropriately for today, *"but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).* Could it be that much of the anemic nature of the contemporary church is due to the immaturity of most believers in the churches?

We are commanded to evangelize. We are also commanded to build up (bring to maturity) the body of Christ. It's not a matter of "*eⁱther-or*" but rather the Scripture teaches "*both-and*." Evangelism and edification are not alone. The third objective of the church is to equip the saints (or believers) for the work of the ministry. The role of the church leadership, according to Ephesians 4: 1-16, is to accomplish this equipping function. By doing so the body of Christ is readied for every good work. Every-member ministry demands that each individual discover his or her area of ministry (i.e. spiritual gifts)* Leadership must assume the responsibility for enabling the body to carry out its appointed task.

To summarize, evangelism, edification and equipping are the three objectives of a New Testament Church. They are also the objectives of SGBC. If an individual accepts the responsibilities of leadership in this local body, himself to the Biblical framework of church. It's never an easy task. demands place godly tension in our the obedient church (and church benefits are obvious. No wonder he is committing the New Testament The Scriptural lives. Yet, for leadership), the Apostle John was led by the Holy Spirit to give these words. "*And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments*" (I John 2:3).

Practice

Once the appropriate Biblical focus is given, the test of obedience is whether or not "*we practice what preach*." It is the expressed intent of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church to be continually under the searching scrutiny of the Scriptures. It's much too easy to drift from and lapse the tension of New Testament pimples and lapse into comfortable, non-threatening modes of routine and ritual. To be Biblical, however, we must always evaluate what we are

doing in light of what. We are supposed to be doing. The process can be painful, even threatening, but it must be done. Those charged with such a task are the spiritual leaders of the Church.

Of the Individual Believer

Sovereign Grace Baptist Church embraces every-member, lifestyle Christianity. That does not mean that we do not have a carefully ordered structure. But it does mean that we seek to encourage and stimulate, teach and train all members how to "*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*" (Eph. 4:1). Church structure should foster the worthy walk of the individual believer. Therefore, each member of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is expected to cultivate and nurture his individual walk with Christ. This should work in harmony with the ministry of the church. Additionally, each person covenants with the Lord and this local body certain, particular commitments as outlined in the "*Discovery Series*." These covenant commitments are reproduced as follows:

- To personally grow toward spiritual maturity in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).
- To live before the world a life of Christian example and integrity (2 Thess. 2:10-12), and if married to seek to fulfill God's design for marriage and the home (Col. 3:13-21).
- To seek to understand and to exercise my spiritual gift(s) in a supportive, non-divisive manner and, *thereby, to actively* participate as a needed member of this body of believers (Rom. 12:3-8).
- To uphold fellow believers in prayer, to aid those in need, to care for widows and orphans, to love the brethren and to diligently serve the Lord (Rom. 12:9-13ff; James 1:27).
- To submit to the authority of the elders who have oversight for this body of believers (deb. 13:17).
- To support through cheerful and worshipful giving the financial obligations of the church (2 Cor. 8:1-6ff; 9:6-7).

- To support the biblical philosophy of ministry as outlined in the *Discovery Series*.

To be a part of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church then, one must not only embrace the Biblical philosophy of ministry, but be willing to practice it as well. For the local church to spiritually succeed, it is necessary that each member "*practice the principles.*"

Of the Church-At-Large

The church body must also be obedient to the Scriptural teachings concerning the church. Principles must be incorporated into church action. What follows is a list of the major areas of corporate ministry at SGBC. Each area should always be in a process of review. Scriptural evaluations are always appropriate. The *Discovery Series* also gives helpful information in this regard.

Worship Service

- Day _Sunday mornings
- Time 10:30AM
- Format Worship Sharing and Teaching (10:30-12:00)
- Participation Anyone may attend; our ministry is open to all.

Major objectives

- To actively and obediently worship God in spirit and in truth (On. 4:24; Ps. 95:6-7).
- To promote the edification of the assembled church through a careful balance of *teaching, praying, singing* and sharing (Feb. 10:23-25; Col. 3:16-17; Eph. 5: 18-21; Rom. 12:10; IPet. 1:22).
- To equip the saints *for the work of* the ministry (Eph. 4:11-16; cf. also I Thess. 5:12; IPet. 4:1 ff).

- To accurately proclaim the truth and application of the Word of God to the hearts and lives of all persons (2 Cora 5:17-21; Col. 1:28; 2 Tim. 4:2; Ezra 7:10; Ps. 143:8,10).

Other Ministries

Some of the present or future areas of ministry are listed. The critical point to underscore is that Sovereign Grace Baptist Church will seek to minister to the needs of the body. Every member is a minister. Every believer should have a ministry in the lives of someone or a group of people. As these ministry options arise, the body will function in ministry within, for members of this local assembly, to ministry without, for members of our community. Some of these options and probable ministries are included in the following list.

Youth Ministry

A specialized ministry to the young people; not to be seen in competition to the ministry of the home which is primary, rather it will seek to build confident, growing disciples capable of standing firm, ministering within and penetrating the youth culture for Christ.

Women's Ministry: Ladies of Grace

A multi-faceted area of ministry which could include such specifics as evangelistic and fellow-ship coffees, intercessory prayer groups, women's Bible studies, special retreats and conferences and other options as the needs of the church surface.

Evantglistic Oureach Ministries

Seeing the world through the eyes of Christ is paramount; this ministry will focus the attention of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church to the greater task of reaching the world for Christ; information and participation will be stressed.

Other Options

What has proceeded is only a sampling of how the body of Christ might minister to one another and the community-at-large. Other possible concerns might include support for moral or religious issues, halfway houses, ministry to the poor and needy, service projects, support of missionaries-in-residence, and so forth.

A Point to Be Remembered

At this juncture one key point must be stressed again. It is not the desire of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church to provide activities to keep people busy. We seek to minister when and where we sense the leadership of God. This requires that every leader and every member prayerfully consider his obligation of ministry essentials and choice of ministry opportunities. A busy life can become a barren life. Activity for activity's sake is not our goal. However, we do affirm every-member ministry. Each part of the body of Christ must find his or her own area of ministry. This leads to the discovery, nurture, use and practice of spiritual gifts within the body (1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12, Eph. 4). As Peter noted, *"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (1 Pet.

4:10). With this in mind, it's easy to understand our focus on "*every-member ministry.*"

Purpose

Thus far, we have outlined the philosophy of ministry of SGBC. In particular, Biblical principles and practice have been discussed. In this final section, we touch upon the overarching purpose of this church. What follows is the "*Statement of Purpose of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church.*" This Statement carefully summarizes the mission of this fellowship of believers.

Purpose Statement

Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is a body of believers who are committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ, who worship God in spirit and truth, and who purpose to glorify God by evangelism of the non-believer, edification of the believer and the equipping of the believer for the purpose of living a distinctive, Christ centered life style. We believe this lifestyle demands consistent, personal application of Biblical truth, intimate spiritual relationships, and mutual accountability.

Conclusion

What has proceeded is an overview of the philosophy of ministry of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church: its principles, practice and purpose. The Word of God has given the blueprint for successful church ministry. It is the task of the church leadership to insure the local body is built according to these plans.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?” (1 Corinthians 12:12-17)

Chapter Two

The Ministry of the Elder

Chapter Two

The Ministry of the Elder

If the intended ministry of the church is ever to be realized in fact, and not simply in principle, then a proper understanding of the Biblical officers of the church is absolutely necessary. The New Testament church was a church of every-member ministry. It was a training church where the saints (believers) were equipped for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12ff). It was a church that was led by distinct officers with distinct functions. For example, note the salutation of Paul to the Philippian church. *"Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).* Paul not only addressed the church as a whole (saints) but he singled out the officers ("*overseers*" and "*deacons*") for particular greeting. It comes as no surprise, then, that the first epistle of Timothy delineates the spiritual requirements necessary for these two offices (I Tim. 3:1-16). Their ministry was of critical importance to the proper leadership of the New Testament church. It is no less important today.

Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is committed to following the Scriptural guidelines for the church. As such, these principles blueprint our specific goals and ministry strategies. They also dictate our church organization and leadership. This particular chapter outlines the ministry the ministry of the elder (overseer, shepherd) at SGBC. We will view this ministry from two vantage points: principles and practice.

Principles

The *Scripture* serves as our guide for determining the ministry of the elders. The proper interpretation of the *Word of God* is necessarily grounded in the grammatical-historical setting. From such a historically conditioned interpretation, the church looks for "principles" which are timeless.

A principle gives us a truth that is always true about a particular topic. It is usually supported by appealing to more than one passage.

A practice refers to the present-day implementation of a principle that is timeless in nature.

Thus, in a somewhat simplistic fashion, we can deduce that God loved Israel (historically-grounded interpretation); He loves all men (timeless principle supported by other texts); He also loves me (present application).

In this section, we will look to timeless principles concerning the ministry of the elder. Our attention will center upon three areas of concern.

Name

The *New Testament* uses three distinct titles for one particular office in the church. These titles are

- Elder (presbuteros)
- Overseer (episkopos)
- Shepherd-pastor (poimainos).

That they all refer to the same office can be seen from two lines of reasoning.

First, there are two key passages in the *New Testament* where the three titles or descriptions are interchangeable.

- *Acts 20:17* And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

- *Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Thus we see Paul calling for the elders and then referring to them as overseers and shepherds.

Additionally, note the exhortation of Peter in this regard.

- *1 Peter 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 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.*

Note here how Peter exhorts the elders to function as overseers and shepherds. Obviously, the three titles are synonymous for one office. Perhaps the reason for this can best be seen in the following way.

The term "*elder*" emphasizes the office while "*overseeing*" and "*shepherding*" (pastoring) tend to emphasize the functions of the elder. Whatever may be the design of God in giving such flexibility in the designation of the office, one issue is clear.

The elder is to function in a particular way, not simply hold an honorary position. It is an honorable office of servant-ministry and requires depth of character and commitment.

The second line of reasoning to demonstrate that the elder-overseer-shepherd is but one office is discovered in the list of qualifications for the office. In I Timothy 3:1-7 we find the spiritual qualifications for the office of overseer. The titles of elder and shepherd are not even mentioned.

In Titus 1:5-9, Paul instructs Titus concerning the appointment of elders. In verse seven, he shifts the title from elders to overseer and continues the *same* discussion of spiritual qualifications. The inference is clear. The names of the *New Testament* office are interchangeable. They all refer to the one specific office. Again, the emphasis needs to be upon performance, not position. While desire for the position of elder is commended in Scripture (I Tim. 3:1), the faithful performance of the functions of an elder is the most critical aspect.

At Sovereign Grace Baptist Church we refer to the leadership office as elder. Obviously, from *Scripture*, we could have referred to the office by the terms of "*bishops*," "*overseers*," "*shepherds*" or even "*pastors*." The flexibility is certainly available to do so, yet we have chosen the term "*elder*." While many in the congregation may be somewhat confused, our communication to the body and the subsequent passage of time will clarify such problems.

To reiterate a crucial point, remember that elder, overseer (bishop) and shepherd (pastor) are synonymous to one office. We, however, have chosen elder to describe the office (and for good Biblical reasons-elder is used over 50% of the time when the office is referred to in the New Testament). Therefore, we at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church have a Board of Elders who oversee, rule, and shepherd our congregation. This leads us to consider the number of elders for any given local church.

Number (Plurality)

Many churches in America are familiar with the one-leader or one-pastor type of church organization. It is so prevalent among certain denominations that it has been uncritically accepted as the norm. But is this tradition biblical? Is the *New Testament* church to have one or many leaders? The Biblical evidence declares that church leadership is by a plurality of elders (bishops, shepherds). The *New Testament* in several key passages supports this.

First, in the emerging church during Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches (Acts 14:23).

Later, in Paul's third missionary journey he called to himself the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17).

Still later, while in prison, Paul penned his letter to the overseers and deacons. The point is obvious. The early church had plurality of elders. (For further confirmation, see Jas. 5:14; Acts 21:28; I Tim. 5:17; I Pet. 5:1).

The Board of Elders at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is committed to plurality. While we recognize that each elder has a unique contribution and may be delegated a particular responsibility, the Board of Elders oversees and shepherds the body of believers known as Sovereign Grace Baptist Church.

It is the Board of Elders that hires vocational ministers or staff workers to better accomplish our ministry goals as a church. These individuals may or may not become elders in the due course of time. Not

every staff member will be qualified or even necessary for the careful oversight of the church.

A staff member who is an elder does not assume priority over other elders. This would defeat the purpose of plurality and negate consensus decision-making on the Board. However, the staff elder would naturally be delegated greater administrative responsibility (see, for example, I Tim. 5:17 as a reason or model) because of his remuneration from the church. Yet this is a delegated responsibility and that elder, like each elder, is accountable to the Board of which he also is a member).

The Board of Elders will assign titles, as well as detailed job descriptions. In order to penetrate and communicate to our culture, the Elders may exercise this Biblical flexibility and decide to use certain common designations for titles (e.g. pastors, ministers, et al.). Whatever, the issue should not be clouded by emotional attachments or emotional concerns. The primary leadership position of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is the Biblical office of elder. And the chief criterion of successful leadership is Biblical performance. Do the elders fulfill their God-given functions of overseeing and shepherding? This leads us to the third principle.

Nature (Function)

What is the task of the elder? Fortunately, the Scripture is not silent concerning the specified functions that characterize the nature of the office of elder. Note as well, these are shared areas of ministry. Each elder participates to one degree or another in these ministry functions.

- **To oversee** or rule well (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17). The first function of an elder is to direct the affairs of the church (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17}. In a mutual-ministry approach, the shared responsibility of elder rule will minimize individual weaknesses and maximize strengths. Therefore, the proper administration of the church rests with the elders_ The Board may choose to delegate their responsibilities to the church staff, but the authority for the leadership of the church lies with the overseers.
- **To shepherd** the flock of God (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2) A major function of elders is to shepherd the church. *"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care..." (I Pet. 5:2a NIV)*. The imagery of shepherding suggests tender care, protection and feeding. These principles lie at the heart of the shepherd-minister who would serve as an elder. They form a Biblical framework for effective ministry.
- **To be an example** (I Pet. 5:3-5; Heb. 13:7) In emphasizing this point the writer of Hebrews noted the function in this way. "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and *imitate their faith*" (Heb.13: 7 NIV). Elders cannot lead further into spiritual

things than they have personally gone. Each leader within God's church must have the attitude of the Apostle Paul. "*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ*" (1 Cor. 11:1).

- **To guard** right doctrine (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9) A critical ingredient to effective overseeing is the elder's command of Scripture. He is to be one who is "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). Doctrinal purity is a prerequisite to spiritual health and vitality. Elders are charged with the task of maintaining the church on solid, Biblical ground.
- **To confront** and initiate discipline when necessary (*Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; see also 1 Thess. 5:12*). If the tasks of careful oversight and doctrinal purity are taken seriously, then a proper administration of church discipline will naturally follow. Spiritual discipline is never easy but it is commanded. The elders must assume their responsibility for the care of the church. No wonder, then, that the laity body of *believers* is encouraged in the following way. "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

- **To minister** to the sick (or weak) and needy (Jas. 5:14-15; I Tim. 5:3-16; compare also God's concern for the needy in Ps. 12:5; 69:33; et al.; see also "hospitable" in I Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8). A part of the elders' responsibility is to shepherd those in need. While there is debate as to whether the "sick" of James 5 are physically sick or spiritually weak, one definite principle is sure. The elders are to evidence their concern for those who are in need by faithful prayer. For certain, an elder's ministry reaches out to those in need.
- **To appoint** and commission leadership (I Tim. 5:22; I Tim. 4:14; compare with Eph. 4:11-12ff). As elders oversee and shepherd the church, they will of necessity be equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. Not only do elders care for the administrative organization of the church, but they are responsible for the raising up of new leadership as well. Such an ongoing task requires the utmost spiritual discernment and care.

Summary

Thus, we have seen that the office of church leadership at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is that of elder. Although the New Testament is flexible and uses inter-changeably elder, overseer and shepherd, the best description of the office is elder. Therefore, Sovereign Grace Baptist Church has a Board of Elders. Additionally, we have noted the necessity for a plurality of elders. Our Biblical conviction is that the Bible supports mutuality of ministry and plurality

of leadership. Seven specific ministry functions were also suggested. Each was stated and briefly defined. These Biblical functions instruct the elder as to the type of ministry he is to have. Some practical observations follow.

Practice

Biblical principles, by their very nature, are timeless. They suggest broadly what God desires in a particular area of concern. However, the specifics of the practice of such principles may vary. While the principle reflects non-negotiable, timeless truth, the application of the principle may *vary* from congregation to congregation. What follows in the remainder of this chapter are specific, suggested or potential applications of the principles previously outlined. The format of the "practice" section will parallel the format of the "principles."

Name

The primary, ministry-oriented leadership group of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is the Board of Elders. To facilitate communication to the church body and the community, as well), the term "elders" has been chosen to best identify the office. While it is true that "overseer" (bishop) or "shepherd" (pastor) could have been used, these terms, in our estimation, best describe the function of the office; likewise, "elder" best describes the name (see again the previous discussion in the "principles" section).

Whenever a ministry position or action is taken by the ruling leadership of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church it will be communicated to the church-at-large by the responsibility and authority of the Board of Elders, not the church staff. It will be the job of the staff to carry out the responsibilities delegated by the Elders.

If an individual within the local body desires to suggest an item of church-wide critical concern, they should seek a member of the Elders. The elder will conscientiously share that concern with the Board, that the issue might be prayerfully addressed. This seems to be the *New Testament* pattern and one that we at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church will seek to practice.

Number (Plurality)

As demonstrated in the "principles" section of this chapter, Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is committed to the concept of a plurality of elders. In practice, this suggests at least four things.

FIRST, we are committed to multiplicity of elders. From the Biblical passages already discussed (cf. Acts 14:23; 20:17; 21:28; Jas. 5:14; I Tim. 5:17; I Pet. 5:1), we see a group of elders functioning together in one general locale. For our church, this group is called the Board of Elders. As a general rule, it suggests that at least three or more elders are needed to function properly in a plurality format. As the Scripture admonishes, "Where there is no guidance, the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory." (Prov. 11:14)

SECOND, the Board of Elders, while composed of several different men, acts as one body. WHEN THE BOARD ASSEMBLES, IT IS NECESSARY FOR EACH MAN TO LAY ASIDE PERSONAL FEELINGS IN ORDER TO SEEK GOD'S BEST. Therefore, we practice consensus decision-making. Without unanimity of heart and mind, the Elders of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church cannot and will not act. This conviction requires three things of any elder.

- **It necessitates spiritually minded men who fulfill the qualifications of the office** (see "Appendix A: The Qualifications for an Elder").

- **It means these men must be bound together by a shared sense of purpose and calling.** This will evidence itself in a trusting relationship within the Board. It must be recognized that each elder has a unique voice and contribution to make. Without a deep sense of trust, the Elders cannot function with one mind (cf. Phil. 2:1-4).
- **Unanimity refers to the end product of decision-making, not the process.** Freedom to voice concern, convictions and disagreements must be held in trust by all. Seeking God's mind is not an easy process. It often requires agonizing amounts of time to reach a consensus. Such a mode of operation seems unwieldy and impractical from a human perspective, but the issues that face the Elders are of deeper, spiritual significance. The responsibility of the Elder Board is to seek and discover God's best for SGBC. For our Board, that confirmation will come through unanimity of action.

THIRD, the Board of Elders is not synonymous with the church staff. The ruling authority of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church (under Christ's ultimate authority) lies with the Board, not with the church staff. It is the function of the Elders to oversee and delegate specific administrative and ministry responsibilities to the staff. This is analogous to (though obviously different from) the situation described in Exodus 18 and Acts 6. In both cases, the principle of delegation was practiced to the best benefit of all.

One further clarification is needed. At Sovereign Grace Baptist Church there may be one or more elders who are also staff members. In such a case, these elders will function within the Board as any elder should. There are no artificial distinctions of priority or position due to such an elder's dual role (i.e. elder and staff worker). Such an elder may have increased responsibility due to availability, experience, education or spiritual gifts, but such responsibility still lies within the guidelines of plurality and unanimity. To highlight, again, a basic principle, the Board of Elders holds the overseeing and shepherding

functions of leadership. The church staff will assist the elders in carrying out their function.

FOURTH, not every qualified member of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church will necessarily serve as an elder. Though it is a noble ambition, commended by Paul in I Timothy 3:1, meeting the Biblical qualifications will not automatically insure that the individual will become an elder. This raises a key question. What conditions must exist in order for the current Board to add qualified men? It has already been stated that plurality implies at least two or three elders. Beyond this, the *New Testament* seems flexible.

For Sovereign Grace Baptist Church our concern is that each elder not only provide personal counsel and wisdom for the church as a whole, but also be able to coordinate a major ministry area. In short, when the Board of Elders senses a need for elder coordination or supervision, and if a qualified individual is available for that ministry area, then the Board will seek to add that person.

Nature

Following the outline given in the previous section, the “practice” of the elder is now considered with respect to ministry function. Specific, practical suggestions follow which clarify the previous discussion. Other applications of these principles may well be implemented.

- To oversee or rule well (1 Thes. 5:12; I Tim. 3:1; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17). The Board of Elders is responsible for directing the affairs of the church. Several insights for practice are suggested.

First, the Elders affirm the need for unanimity in decision-making and action. Ruling is by consensus, not coercion.

Second, it is the responsibility inherent in "oversight" that the Elders insure the Biblical stability of the church. This is accomplished as the Board periodically reviews the "state of the church" to evaluate whether or not the church is adhering to its Biblical philosophy of ministry. In addition, the Elders are responsible for the orderly conduct of church affairs (e.g. see I Cor. 14:40).

Additionally, the Elders will carefully delegate certain responsibilities to the church staff. This will allow the Board to concentrate on breadth (church-at-large) rather than depth (specific ministry).

- To shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2). In order to shepherd God's people, some or all of the following might be appropriate.

First, a spiritually qualified elder must be "able to teach" (I Tim. 3:2; cf. also Titus 1:9). This may include the teaching (sermon) during the Worship Service, moderating the Share Service, leading a Community Group, directing an Equipping Workshop, training others for specific service, discipling a group of men, et al.

A second aspect of shepherding is spiritual counsel. Elders are to shepherd the flock and Biblical guidance may be a part of that ministry function.

A third aspect, confrontation and discipline, is discussed as a separate function. However, it is to be considered a part of the ruling and shepherding functions.

- To be an example {I Pet. 5:3-5; Heb. 13:17) Incumbent upon each elder is to recognize that he is to be an example to the body-at-large. There are two major dimensions to consider. The elder must have unblemished spiritual character. The Biblical qualifications (I Tim. 3 and Titus 1) must be maintained, not simply achieved. Integrity of character is essential. Although perfection will never be realized, maturity and spiritual progress should be evident. Secondly, the elder must have distinctive spiritual conduct.

To be an example to the flock, he must be able to echo by his life the words of the Apostle Paul, "*I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me*" (I Cor. 4:16).

- To guard right doctrine (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9). A major responsibility of the Elders is the doctrinal purity and stability of the church. In order to "guard right doctrine," the Elders must consider four items.

First, the philosophy of ministry embraced by the church must be able to stand the scrutiny of the Scriptures. Any additions, corrections or revisions must bring the church in line with the Word of God.

Additionally, the Elders are responsible for issuing any "Ministry Statements" to the body. These position papers will clarify the church's stand on any issue or doctrinal matter.

Third, the Elders, as individuals and as a Board, will exhort and rebuke fellow believers as the need arises. Such action is to be taken according to Biblical principles with a view to the restoration and spiritual health of the believer (again, see the following section on church discipline).

Last, it is the responsibility of the Elders to protect the integrity of the doctrinal content of all church-wide ministries. This includes the Worship Service, Learning Center materials, Community Group curriculum, Equip-ping Workshops, and so forth.

- To confront and initiate discipline when necessary (Matt, 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Thes. 3: 14-15), Church discipline rests with the action of the Elder Board operating in oneness and harmony. Confrontation and discipline are taken seriously by the Elders. Three controlling principles guide the implementation of church discipline.

First, the desired goal for confrontation and discipline is restoration of the believer and health of the body. Individual rebellion against God can affect other members of God's household (e.g. refer to the "murmurings" of the Israelites in the wilderness wanderings in the Book of Numbers). The Elders are responsible for the health and care of the church.

Second, confrontation is appropriate when done in a proper manner. Spiritual rebuke, though never pleasant, is required in certain cases. To shrink from confrontation is to avoid the teaching of Scripture.

Third, such discipline is an outworking of *the* principle of "accountability." The errant believer cannot be ignored. We are responsible to the Lord and to one another.

- To minister to the sick (or weak) and needy {Jas. 5:14-15; I Tim. 5:3-16; of. also God's concern for the needy in Ps. 12:5; -69:33; et al.; of. also "hospitable" in I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8) Ever sensitive to the flock, the Elders must always see themselves as servant-leaders of the church. Sensitivity to the needs of the body (whatever form those needs may take) and action to meet those needs will characterize this function. Possible examples might include benevolence ministries, aid to the poor and needy, care of the sick, special prayer for those in need, and so forth. While others may administer such ministries, the responsibility rests with the Board.
- To approve, appoint and commission leadership (I Tim. 5:22; I Tim. 4:14; of. Eph. 4:11-12ff). The appointing of the leadership of Fellowship Bible Church rests with the Elders. Specifically, this will include the choice of additional elders (who will be recognized or ratified by the body), the selection and appointment of deacons (for specific tasks-see chapter three for details), the choosing and training of Community Group leaders, the selection and/or approval of Learning Center staff, and so forth. The Elders are charged by Scripture with the screening of potential leaders within the body. It is an important task requiring care and discretion.

Summary

This section of the chapter on the office of elder has focused upon practical ramifications. Not every application has been given or suggested. Yet enough has been sketched to identify the office by name, number and nature (function).

Without a firm foundation at this level of ministry leadership, the church cannot be successful {Matt. 7:24-27). The biblical philosophy for church ministry is *implemented* by biblical leadership. This chapter has focused upon the ministry of the elder Sovereign Grace Baptist Church.

Procedures

To implement into practice the Biblical principles of church leadership is the crux of effective elder ministry. There are, however, practical expectations that each elder or potential elder must consider. These form, in a sense, a kind of "*job description*" for elders at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church. While a certain amount of flexibility must be maintained, faithfulness in the following guidelines is necessary. Each elder must consider the following and his ability to fulfill these expectations before accepting the privilege and responsibility of being an elder at SGBC.

- Meeting the Biblical qualifications for Elders.
- Attending Elders' Meetings and retreats.
- Serving the Body in a "Major Ministry" area (some examples follow).
 - ❖ Major Ministry area coordinator or over-sight (e.g. Youth, Singles, Missions, etc.)
 - ❖ Mini-church Leader
 - ❖ Community Group Leader
 - ❖ Teaching Leader
- ❖ Others as designated by the Elders
- Formulating and supporting the decisions of the Board.
- Carrying out special, specific tasks as given by the Board.

Conclusion

This concludes the discussion of the office of elder. Scriptural principles with suggested practice have been listed and explained. A "job description" was also sketched in broad strokes. Successful leadership is necessary for successful ministry. The Biblical office of elder is one of great privilege and sobering responsibility. It would be well that elders might voice and live the spirit of the writer of

Hebrews, "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience,
desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things" (Heb. 13:18).

Chapter Three
The Ministry of the Deacon

One of the major areas of confusion within the doctrine and practice of the church is the intended ministry of the deacon. In some settings the Board of Deacons serves as the ruling leaders of the church. On the basis of the previous chapter (which outlines the responsibilities of the elder), such an arrangement is not acceptable. In other settings the deacons appear to be little more than a sounding board for the pastor. Other churches have deacons serve as lay-pastors and entrust a "*flock-ministry*" to their care. While such a ministry is commendable, a question arises, "*Is it Biblical?*" There is little debate that the church needs deacons, but what should they do?

It is instructive that the *New Testament* speaks of two distinct church offices. The elders (overseers, shepherds) are not to be alone in the leadership of Christ's church. It requires two offices with the unique ministries of both to accomplish the purposes of God. The tasks are not the same, but the stewardship is similar. Qualified men with servants' hearts are to accomplish their particular ministries within the local body. There is never to be an issue of primacy, only calling.

The fact that the two offices are distinct i.e clear from the Philippian address. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops (overseers) and deacons (Philippians 1:1).

The "*saints*" are the believers, that is, the assembly or local expression of *the* Body of Christ. "*Overseers*" refers to the church office of elder. "*deacons*" refers to a separate office, which is the subject of this chapter. They are separate and distinct but they are together in leadership of the church.

Principles

As noted in the previous chapter, principles refer to timeless truths about a particular topic or issue. In this section our attention is upon the Biblical principles for the ministry of the deacon. We focus upon three areas of concern.

Name

The Biblical term behind the word "*deacon*" occurs frequently in the New Testament. Although there is some question as to the identity and meaning of the root for this term, in its three forms this word occurs more than 100 times. In verb form, *diakoneo* can mean "*to minister to*" or "*to serve*". The general noun form, *diakonia*, is often translated by such words as "*ministry*," "*service*" or the like. The personal noun, *diakonos*, can be rendered "*minister*," "*servant*" or in special usage, "*deacon*."

There are three non-debatable occurrences of *diakonos* where the term is used in the specialized sense of the office of deacon. The first, found in Philippians 1:1, has previously been mentioned in this chapter. The second and third occurrences are found in Paul's first epistle to Timothy. "*Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre*" (1 Timothy 3:8).

Verse 12 of I Timothy 3 continues, "*Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well*"(1 Tim. 3:12).

These passages obviously refer to a specific office of church leadership. To describe this office the Greek word has been transliterated from the Biblical language to English in the word "*deacon*." Thus, deacon refers to one of the two offices of the *New Testament* church.

Number (Plurality)

As clearly seen in the Philippians 1:1 passage (cf. also I Tim. 3:8,12), Paul greets the deacons (plural) at the church in Philippi. While there has been some debate as to whether or not there should be one or more elders, little discussion has questioned the Biblical teaching or practice of plurality of deacons. Whatever the *New Testament* might suggest for their function, it is clear that many deacons are both indicated and preferred.

Nature (Function)

While there are a number of instructive passages that speak of *the* elder's function, there are precious few (if any) that speak clearly of the deacon's function within the body. Such silence may be an indication that there is to be a certain amount of flexibility regarding the officers and their work of ministry. What then should be the ministry of the deacon?

FIRST, the office of deacon is a servant-oriented ministry. This is clear from the etymology of "diakonos." The word itself implies service. Related words in the Biblical language add to this idea of service, bond-service, waiting tables, ministry to various needs and so forth. Whatever deacons might specifically do, the attitude of service to others must be present (note again I Timothy 3:13 and the

previous footnote; if referring to the office of deacon, this passage lends support to the concept of deacons as those who serve).

SECOND, the New Testament is silent concerning specific instructions for the office of deacon. If, however, Acts 6:1-6 refers to the emerging office, then this passage can offer insight into the nature of deacon ministry. The passage relates how the church appointed seven men to the specific task of "*servicing tables*" or ministering the needed food to certain widows. Although the term *diakonos* is not used, nor these men specifically referred to as deacons, in verses 1 and 2, related terms are used which suggest "*service*" and "*waiting tables.*" Thus, many believe these men to be early deacons or at least the forerunners of the office of deacon.

A final observation might be pertinent with respect to Acts 6. If indeed, as we are suggesting, the passage refers to the emerging office, the reason for their existence is equally instructive. The twelve felt overwhelmed by physical, ministry problems and were unable to carry out their primary concerns of prayer and *the Word*. The selection of seven, spiritually minded men would release the twelve to complete their task. Additionally, the needs of the widows would still be met. Quite possibly, this is the key to deacon ministry. They are to be appointed by the leadership of the church to specific needful tasks to free the leadership to accomplish their functions within the body.

Practice

It is important for effective church ministry to not only discover Biblical principles but also suggest practice as well. This section will parallel the principles with suggestions for implementation.

Name

Sovereign Grace Baptist Church is committed to having the office of deacon. Due to the nature of the office, it is neither necessary nor desirable to have a Board of Deacons. Instead we *refer to* the Body of Deacons. The reason is quite practical. A board suggests that deacons regularly meet together to discuss particular business and this will not be the case. Generally speaking, deacons will not be required to meet together but rather to serve in their particular areas of concern. They serve, then, as a body not a board.

Number

As has been demonstrated in the previous section, the office of deacon requires a plurality of qualified men. If, however, the number of deacons is related to the need, then the actual number may vary throughout the life of the church. Therefore, at SGBC, we are not concerned with "*filling a quota*," but rather meeting the needs of the body

One further point is needful. Since the number of deacons who will serve the body is dependent upon the need at any point in time, what happens to a deacon if the need is short-term? In such a case where the reason for having a deacon's service is no longer needed, the deacon

ceases to serve (function) with respect to the office. If at a later date the need arises again or a separate situation surfaces, then he may serve again as a deacon. Once again, need determines the number. Conceivably then, a deacon could serve the body intermittently for a number of years to meet a variety of ministry needs.

Nature (Function)

The "Principles" section noted the silence of the New Testament with respect to specific functions for the office of deacon. Using key passages about the office, several broad principles were deduced to guide in sketching the work of the deacon. What follows is a list of practical insights that will assist in formulating deacon ministry at SGBC.

- The office of deacon is not a "*ruling*" office.

The *New Testament* does not blur the distinction between elder and deacon. Neither should the *New Testament* church. Elders are to oversee and shepherd. Deacons are to serve.

- The office of deacon is a service-oriented ministry.

Deacons may be characterized as meeting the needs of particular situations. Often this will free the elders to focus more on their true functions, while at the same time allowing the deacons to minister to the body in their particular way.

- The function of a deacon is *not* perpetual.

A deacon serves as long as the ministry need exists. If the need ceases, so then does the function of that particular deacon.

Procedures

Based upon the previous discussion, the ministry of the deacon at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church might include any of the following areas of concern. Other areas, as need might arise, could be added to this representative list:

- Director of Ushers
- Physical set-up for worship, special activities, so forth
- Building and grounds
- Building committee (new construction) Audio-visual Tape ministry
- Equipment.: maintenance and repair
- Benevolence
- And so forth; the areas will be as variable as the needs which will

arise.

Conclusion

This chapter has probed the New Testament teaching regarding the office of deacon. Biblical "Principles" were suggested with respect to the name, number and nature (or function) of the office. Specific application followed in the "Practice" section.

The office of deacon is not optional. It is a necessary and valuable addition to the total leadership of the church. Without deacon ministry, the elders cannot effectively fulfill their role. Without elders the deacons are left without necessary direction for the good of the whole church. Both offices are Biblical. Both offices are necessary and needed for SGBC.

The Qualifications for an Elder

The stability and success of a *New Testament* Church will depend in great measure upon the strength of the human leadership. This does not nullify the guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit or the operative, enabling grace of God. These truths comfort and sustain us. But the organization of the church has been established by our Lord and revealed in Scripture. And this organization requires responsible human leadership. But how does one know who should lead and who should follow? What guidelines do we have in order to insure that we are making the right choices?

Interestingly, God has revealed the kind of man who is qualified to be an elder (shepherd or overseer). The remarkable observation is that the emphasis is upon mature character, not ability or promise. It would appear that godliness is God's standard for leadership. Whatever talents, leadership traits and abilities an elder might possess is all well and good, but the bottom-line issue remains: "*What kind of Christian character does he possess?*"

What follows in this brief appendix is a cursory analysis of the Biblical qualifications of an elder. Two major passages give the appropriate data: I Timothy 3 and Titus I. In this particular study, the Titus passage is considered first and the Timothy passage is added to the Titus data. Twenty character qualities are identified. To assist in personalizing the meaning, suggestions have been made as to how this characteristic might appear in life-situations.

The "*principle-in action*" merely attempts to describe (applicationally) the quality. Certainly, additional words could further describe the life-principle.

To lead God's church requires a special man. None of us is perfect, certainly not even the leadership of the church. But the elder is characterized as a man who is making progress in these various areas of personal life. Like Paul, he would readily admit,

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Philippians 3:12-13).

May the Lord guide us in recognizing such men to lead us in the church. Let us consider the importance of the task and trust God to enable us to seek out and confirm our elders.

The Office of Elder and the Character Qualifications

First Qualification: Above Reproach

Titus 1:6 “If any be blameless...”

- The person not only has a good reputation, but deserves it.
- Man of genuine, observable integrity-, thoroughly honest.
- Unassailable Christian conduct; blameless; unrebukable; spotless,
- The sum total of a mature, distinctive Christian's testimony.

Second Qualification: Married

Titus 1:6 “...the husband of one wife”

- A one-woman kind of man, married and devoted to but one woman.
- Creatively meets the needs of his wife in a special way.
- Known for his love, fidelity and devotion to one wife.
- Has not been through a broken marriage.

Third Qualification: Faithful children

Titus 1:6 “...having faithful children”

- This means he manages well the affairs of the family in a Christian manner.

- 'The older children (lit. offspring) have not rejected Christ and rebelled against the parent's authority.
- Describes a temperate family not characterized by riotous and improper living, but by growth unto maturity.
- Does not describe a man who can minister to others but not his own home.

Fourth Qualification: Not self willed *Titus 1:7 "...not self-willed"*

- Not a self-centered, self pleasing, arrogant person.
- This man is flexible, open, fair; he is willing to admit his mistakes and move forward to correct them.
- Does not dominate and crush others to one's own way of thinking.

Fifth Qualification: Not quick tempered *Titus 1:7 "not soon angry"*

- The person described has his temper under control; does not let anger flare up quickly; does not have a short fuse.
- This one does not let his anger lead to sin (Eph. 4:26).
- Does not jump to angry conclusions before the facts are heard.

Sixth Qualification: Not a drinker. *Titus 1:7 "not given to wine"*

- The person does not have a "*drinking problem*" but rather is moderate or temperate rather than excessive and addictive.
- There is no excessive habit that controls this person; he is self-controlled.
- This one does not exert his liberty and freedom in Christ to the point of excess.

Seventh Qualification: Not pugnacious. *Titus 1:7 "no striker"*

- Does not come to blows in anger against others; does not fight either physically, verbally or emotionally.
- Does not use physical force against others; does not abuse physically his wife or children.

Eighth Qualification: Not greed. *Titus 1:7 "not given to filthy lucre"*

- The person's life is characterized by the pursuit of God rather than dishonest gain {Matt. 6:33}.
- This one is generous in material gifts, not one who hoards his

- wealth.
- Does not seek worldly riches to the exclusion of God.

Ninth Qualification: Hospitable *Titus 1:8 “A lover of hospitality”*

- This one's home is used to entertain others in a relaxed, friendly hospitable manner.
- Feels free to entertain both Christians & non-Christians.
- Open to other people & their company; sees opportunities to use home for ministry (and does so).

Tenth Qualification: Loves what is good. *Titus 1:8 “a lover of good men”*

- Dedicated to that which is truly good or beneficial for personal or family life.
- Seeks out the good in thought motive and deed.
- Known better for the good he embraces rather than simply the evil he avoids.
- Can discern between things *and issues to know* what is truly good and what is not.

Eleventh Qualification: Sensible. *Titus 1:8 ...”sober.”*

- This person lives his life in a wise, prudent manner.
- He has balanced judgment, both in the home, at church, and at work.
- This one makes sound, rational decisions after prayer and reflection; not rash or overly quick to action, but sound—minded.

Twelfth Qualification: Just. *Titus 1:8 “...just”*

- His life evidences a rightness and justness in dealing with God and man.
- Conforms his life to the standards of Scriptures; demonstrates practical righteousness.
- Can make mature, wise, just decisions based on Biblical principles and fairness.

Thirteenth Qualification: Devout. *Titus 1:8 “...holy”*

- Is set apart to God by a distinctive, holy lifestyle that is in harmony with Biblical standards and principles.
- Seeks to daily walk with God in a close, intimate manner.
- Is becoming less attached to the staining, polluting effects of sin and is becoming more and more *“pure in heart”* and action; he is engaged in a pursuit of God and practical holiness.

Fourteenth Qualification: Self-controlled. *Titus 1:8 “...temperate”.*

- This one is disciplined in his personal control of desires, appetites, and felt-needs.
- He holds in check his natural impulses; evidences the fruit of self-control.

- Refrains from that which is not profitable, beneficial, lawful.

Fifteenth Qualification: Able to teach. *Titus 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word*

- He is doctrinally stable, a life-long student of the Scriptures, sound in every respect.
- Does not believe, promote or hold to unreliable beliefs; stands without hesitation in the doctrinally true, conservative, evangelical camp.
- He is both teachable by the Scripture and able to teach the *Scripture*; capable of feeding himself from the Word of God.
- Characterized as a man of the *Word* (Ezra 7:10).
- Able to exhort in sound teaching but also capable of correct rebuke on the basis of Scriptural teaching.

Sixteenth Qualification: Temperate. *1 Timothy 3:2 “vigilant”*

- Refers to one who is "calm, cool, & collected" in the various situations that might arise.
- This man has sober-minded judgment; not prone to excessive bursts of uncontrolled emotion.
- He is stable and steadfast, free from worldly thinking that would tend to cloud his thinking.

Seventh Qualification: Safe; sound in mind, respectable *1 Timothy 3:2 “sober.*

- The man is orderly and well disciplined in personal projects; finishes tasks before him; organized.
- Refers to a responsible, dependable individual; keeps *his promise* with actions *as well as words*.

Eighteenth Qualification: Gentle *1 Timothy 3:3 patient*

- He demonstrates patience, forbearance, and yieldedness (deference) toward others; he is a true gentleman.
- This one is sensitive and tender in dealings with others; he can be bold without being brash.
- The man is sensitive and empathetic.

Nineteenth Qualification: Not a brawler. *1 Timothy 3:3 “not a brawler”*

- The man is not offensively aggressive; does not insist upon his own rights to the exclusion of others.
- He has his temper and words under control; is not quarrelsome.
- He is agreeable, cooperative and a team-worker for the best benefit of the ministry.

- Does not instigate disagreements, quarrels, fights, and unprofitable debates.

Twentieth Qualification: Not a new believer. *1 Timothy 3:6 Not a novice.*

- Has been a believer long (humble) enough to clearly demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and spiritual qualifications for an elder.
- He is not prideful and arrogant; does not seek the office for personal gain (whether financial, social position, prominence, or otherwise).
- Desires to serve Christ not self; is spiritually mature enough to distinguish the difference.
- Has had adequate time to grow and season as a believer he's not simply eager and enthusiastic about Christ; he demonstrates depth and duration of commitment.

The Qualifications For A Deacon

There are two distinct offices for the New Testament church: elder (overseer, shepherd) and deacon (servant, minister). This can best be defended from Paul's opening salutation in *the Epistle to the Philippians*. "*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*" (*Philippians 1:1*). Such a recognized office within the church demands qualified individuals to serve in such a capacity. The spiritual qualifications for the office of deacon are only found in 1 Timothy 3. Again, it appears that godliness of life precedes selection to service. Whatever abilities a man might have, his spiritual character qualified or disqualified him from the office. The same measure must be applied for today's church as well. In the following chart are eight non-debatable, required traits for the office of deacon. Each quality is

listed, cross-referenced to the office of elder able, and possible applications are suggested.. The treatment is brief and is designed to help describe the character trait in action. The comments pertaining to the growing nature of the character of elders also applies to the deacon. No man (save One) is perfect. But each leader in God's church should be maturing in these areas suggested. Men of unquestionable integrity and spotless character are the need of the hour. It is absolutely necessary for those who would serve (and, thereby, lead) in the office of deacon.

The Office of Deacon and the Character Qualifications

First Qualification: Men of dignity.

1 Timothy 3:8 "grave."

- Person of commendable respect in the community; stately and dignified.
- Characterized by a seriousness of mind, manner and character.

Second Qualification: Not double tongued

1 Timothy 3:8 "not double-tongued"

- Able to bridle one's tongue.
- Not given to loose talk or gossip; speaks the truth in love in a forthright manner.
- Honest in speech; not deceitful or insincere in this regard.

Third Qualification: Not a drinker.

1 Timothy 3:8 "not given to wine"

- Compare to the quality required of elders.
- Notable for temperance and sobriety of conduct; not controlled or influenced by external habits.

Fourth Qualification: Not greedy.

1 Timothy 3:8 "not greedy of filthy lucre"

- Compare to the quality required of elders.
- Honesty with particular emphasis upon financial integrity.

Fifth Qualification: Faithful to the Lord. *1 Timothy 3:9 “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”*

- Has a firm, growing faith in Christ.
- Continually in the process of spiritual growth; becoming more godly (i.e. more pure) with the passage of time.
- Settled daily walk.

Sixth Qualification: Tested. *1 Timothy 3:10 “first be proved”*

- Proven spiritual character therefore, not a recent convert.
- One whose life can bear continual scrutiny (both by those inside and outside the church).
- Refer to the quality required of elders in this regard.

Seventh Qualification: Married. *1 Timothy 3:12 “the husbands of one wife”*

- Compare to the quality required of elders.
- Requires a “one-woman” kind of man; family oriented.

Eighth Qualification: Good family life. *1 Timothy 3:12 “ruling their children and their own houses well.”*

- Refer to this quality described for the elders.
- Requires a family focus; natural and growing spiritual elements in a godly family; leads his home in a proper manner.

Supplemental Material

To be Established....

Learning Center

- **Day** Sunday mornings
- **Time** 10:30 AM
- **Format** Varies with each age group; all are characterized by adult modeling, Biblical teaching, creative playing (making), joyful singing, spiritual relationships and so forth.
- **Participation** The Learning Center is directed by adult leaders; designed for children (cradle through the 6th grade).

Major objectives

- To equip parents to establish and maintain a home environment conducive to the spiritual training of the child (Deut. 6:6-9; Eph. 6:1-4; Proy. 1:8-9).
- To train adults how to effectively minister to children of any age group that our children may grow in maturity (Pray. 22:6; Eph. 4:11-15).
- To expose, teach and nurture each child in Biblical principles for life relevant to the child's age (2 Tim. 3:14-15).
- To encourage the development of intimate, spiritual relationships both among the children and between children and adult leaders (Heb. 10:24-25; I John 4:7; also, 3:18).

Community Groups

- **Day** Varies with each Community Group; meets every other week for Bible study, sharing and prayer.
- **Time** Specific hour varies with each group; studies last about two hours.
- **Format** Discussion and sharing on the basis of each member's previously completed Bible study; essentials of a good Community Group include Biblical truth, intimate relationships and mutual accountability.

- **Participation** Anyone may join; limited to those individuals who are willing to commit themselves to the disciplines of the Community Group.

Major objectives

- To study and encourage the application of Biblical truths to one's attitudes and actions in everyday life (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ps. 119:105,160,165; 2 Tam. 2:15).
- To establish and build intimate, spiritual relationships of shared love and concern with other believers (Eph. 5: 18-21; Heb. 10:23-25; Rom. 12:16).
- To encourage and provide personal accountability for our spiritual lives to the Lord Christ and to fellow believers (2 Car. 5:9--10; John 15:4-5; Eph. 5:21; John 13:34-35; Heb. 10:24; 2 Tim. 2:2).