

Why Have Qualified Elders and Deacons?

Dr. Brian Cosby | taken from gospelreformation.net

I'm thankful that God didn't leave us to guess about the qualifications of church leaders. Both Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 provide some basic traits that should characterize elders and deacons. Elders, for example, should be men who are "above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach" and so on (1 Tim. 3:2). They must "not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain" (Titus 1:7). Elders should also "shepherd the flock of God...being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

Deacons should be men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). They should be "dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain" and so on (1 Tim. 3:8). Like elders, they should "be tested first" (v. 10). The "council of elders" (1 Tim. 4:14) plays a key role in the examining and vetting process, as well as the ordination and installation by the laying on of hands.

But notice what are *not* listed as qualifications: seasoned banker, Fortune 500 CEO, politician, an earned Ph.D. in theology, a "nice guy," or the ability to swing a hammer. Unfortunately, these often become the qualifying factors. Moreover, being *qualified* doesn't mean being *perfect*. If that were the case, we would have no elders or deacons at all!

This is not overly complicated. But having *unqualified* elders and deacons can prove disastrous. I want to give you four basic reasons why it is not only God-honoring to have biblically qualified elders and deacons, but pastorally wise and helpful.

1. They make decisions on behalf of your church. I want the most spiritually mature, wise, humble, Christ-exalting, Scripture-knowing, and household-managing men serving as elders and deacons in my church. Why? Because they make decisions—big and small—on behalf of our church. An elder in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), for example, can vote at the highest court of our denomination. If we don't insist upon biblical qualifications, you can have a very unqualified (or even unsaved!) person voting on decisions that affect the entire church, which is neither safe nor right. At the local level, this could lead to entertainment-driven "worship," neglect of healthy church discipline, and many other devastating trends that we are seeing across our nation. We should strive to have biblically qualified leaders making decisions on behalf of our churches.

2. They are examples to the flock. When you examine the lists of qualifications in the passages mentioned above, most of them have to do with character and family life. A healthy church will have elders and deacons who are godly and humble examples to the flock (cf. 1 Pet. 5:3). Unqualified officers—who are promiscuous, uncontrolled, disrespectful, inhospitable, and so on—actually prove a hindrance to the spiritual growth of the members. If the members are told, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls" (Heb. 13:17), but the leaders are leading the sheep to Dr. Phil rather than to Jesus, we have a problem. They should be examples to the flock so that they follow qualified elders and deacons who, in turn, are following Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

3. It provides greater unity and peace in the church. I've served in churches where some elders love Reformed theology and others hate it. I've seen elders split over infant baptism. I've known a deacon to have committed adultery and continue as an active deacon. Make no mistake: *quarrels among the shepherds can disillusion the sheep*. Oftentimes, leaders who are quick-tempered or uncontrolled (cf. Titus 1:7-8) dig in their heels, take "sides" in the church and begin lobbing condescending grenades at one another. Fed up with division, people start leaving. Not that having qualified leaders doesn't rule out the possibility of division, of course, but it does generally provide greater unity and peace in the church. Personally, I'm grateful for the unity of our elders at my church and I don't take that for granted. And while they are not perfect and battle with sin, they are nevertheless biblically qualified. Our members, in turn, see the unity and the peace and it excites them and gives them the confidence to strive with us in our vision and mission as a church.

4. It's a functional trust in the sufficiency of Scripture. Rather than simply trusting someone's financial experience as the qualifying characteristic for making a good deacon, we have the opportunity to trust in the sufficiency of Scripture. Having financial wisdom is certainly a good thing, but it's not God's qualifying *priority* for that office. It might seem that a certain missions-minded man in your church, for example, should be an elder (and for that reason alone). But if he does not manage his household well, he is unqualified (1 Tim. 3:5). This is a step of faith, where worldly wisdom crumbles at the feet of the One who shames the wise (1 Cor. 1:27). Scripture is sufficient. Let's trust God's design—in providing the perpetual offices of elder and deacon—for the God-honoring governing of the body of Christ.

Announcements

- Prayer Meeting this Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.
- To volunteer to help clean the church property, please contact the church at info@antiochpca.com.

Vision

Our vision is to see the historic Antioch Presbyterian Church revitalized as a worshipping community to be a blessing to every man, woman, and child in the growing residential hub west of Woodruff and south of Reidville, to the glory of God.

Mission

Our mission as a parish church at the crossroads of Greenville and Spartanburg Counties is the gathering and perfecting of God's people through biblical worship, evangelism, and pastoral care.

Areas of Ministry Focus

Expository Preaching

Biblical Worship

Parish Evangelism

Pastoral Care

Discipleship

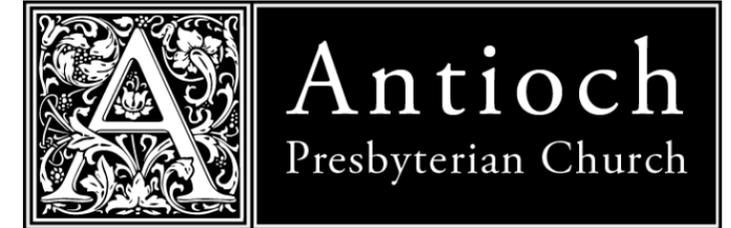
Leadership & Accountability

As a *mission work*, Antioch Presbyterian Church (PCA) is governed and overseen by a *provisional session* of elders serving as a *commission* of Calvary Presbytery. The six men appointed to the *provisional session* are active elders within the bounds of Calvary Presbytery, and they have graciously agreed to serve "above-and-beyond" to encourage the revitalization of Antioch. They include:

Dr. Chipley Bennett, Ph.D. – Ruling Elder, Providence Presbyterian Church
Dr. E. Todd Buchner, D.Min. – Pastor, Reidville Presbyterian Church
Mr. Richard Hollifield – Ruling Elder, Roebuck Presbyterian Church
Mr. William Johnson – Ruling Elder, Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church
Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., Ph.D., D.D. – Professor of Systematic & Applied Theology, President Emeritus, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary;
Organizing Pastor & Moderator of Session, Antioch Presbyterian Church
Pastor Richard Thomas – Senior Pastor, Mount Calvary Presbyterian Church;
Clerk of Session, Antioch Presbyterian Church

Church Staff

Mr. Zachary Groff – Ministerial Assistant
Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. – Organizing Pastor & Moderator of Session



The Lord's Day

January 10, 2021

“The Office of Deacon”

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr.

Worship – Sunday, 5:00 p.m.

Prayer Meeting – Wednesday, 6:00 p.m.

3600 SC-417 | Woodruff, SC 29388

864.519.3604 | info@antiochpca.com | antiochpca.com

The Lord's Day

January 10, 2021

Meditation

Matthew 20:28

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

*Call to Worship

*Congregational Commitment

Minister: Congregation, in whom is your confidence?

Congregation: Our help is in the Name of the Lord, Who made the heavens and the earth.

*Salutation

*Hymn of Adoration

No. 138A

With All My Heart My Thanks I Bring
ST. PETERSBURG

*Prayer of Adoration & Invocation

*Revelation of God's Will

James 1:19-27

*Confession of Sin & Supplication for Grace

O Lord our God, we are reminded of the divine purpose for the incarnation: that His name was called Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. We are grieved that our condition was so sinful that it required nothing less than the death of the Son of God. We mourn over our fallen nature and our sins that proceed from it. We confess that in our flesh dwells no good thing. We have broken your commandments in thought, word, and deed. We have committed sins of omission and commission. We have been lazy over Heaven's concerns and selfish over our own. Even in our best efforts we find pride and self. *"Wretched man that I am. Who will set me free from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* O Father, we thank You for His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension for sinners like me. In His redeeming name, we ask Your forgiveness and pardon. Amen.

*Assurance of Pardon

Jeremiah 31:33, 34

³³ *"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*

Offering

No. 184

Lord, You Love the Cheerful Giver
(stanzas 1, 4)
BEECHER

*Prayer of Thanksgiving & Supplication

Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Hymn of Preparation

No. 119J

Give Me Insight to Learn Your Commands
CONTENTMENT

*Prayer for Illumination

*Old Testament Reading

Deuteronomy 26:12-18

*New Testament Reading

1 Timothy 3:8-16

*Congregational Response

Leader: The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD

Congregation: As the waters cover the sea!

Sermon

"The Office of Deacon"
1 Timothy 3:8-13

Prayer of Application

*Hymn

No. 196

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing
ST. GEORGE'S WINDSOR

Confession of Faith

Apostles' Creed

I believe God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary;
suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell;
the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic† church;
the communion of saints;

the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Communion

*Hymn of Response

No. 204

A Parting Hymn We Sing
SCHUMANN

*Benediction

*Doxology

No. 567

OLD HUNDREDTH

*Silent Prayer

"The Office of Deacon"
1 Timothy 3:8-13

Main Proposition

Because the office of deacon is a spiritual office with spiritual benefits, the deacon must be spiritually qualified.

Outline

- I. The Nature of the Office (v. 1)
- II. The Qualifications of the Office (vv. 8-12)
- III. The Reward of the Office (v. 13)

* Congregation standing, unless physically hindered

† "Catholic" means universal; that is, there is one church across all times, places, and peoples (see WCF 25.2).