

4. Ordination

By Charles Johnson

The Officers of the Church—Pastors and deacons are the permanent officers divinely ordained in a New Testament church (Phil. 1:1). Each church may select men of her choice to fill those offices under the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:1-6; 20:17-18) according to the divinely given qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

(BMA Doctrinal Statement: Article IX, Part E)

The following information on purpose, qualifications, and procedures is designed to assist in the ordination of men to the offices of pastor and deacon within the local church. You will find the ***Licensure and Ordination Preparation Exam*** in Appendix A.

Pastor Purpose and Qualifications

Purpose of the Pastor:

The purpose of the pastor is to lead the local church in the areas of preaching, teaching, administering the ordinances (Baptism and Lord's Supper), and providing pastoral care. He is the shepherd of the church under the authority of Christ. Churches may have one or multiple pastors, depending on God's providence (1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:2, 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Qualifications for the Pastor:

The qualifications for a pastor are specifically outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These qualities include the following:

- A pastor must be blameless (not perfect), having a consistent and godly reputation among the believers;
- A pastor should be the husband of one wife;
- A pastor must be prudent and alert to oversee a flock;
- A pastor must have the ability to teach others the Word of God;
- A pastor must be sober-minded—abstaining from the abuse of alcohol and drugs and practicing biblically-informed reasoning;
- A pastor must not be greedy or covetous;
- A pastor must rule his own house well and orderly;
- A pastor should not be a novice in the faith but should show experienced judgment and maturity.

While local churches have the authority to ordain and call pastors, they do not possess the authority to ordain men to ministry that do not meet the biblical qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.

Ordination Procedure for Pastor

When a church calls a man as pastor who has not been previously ordained, the calling church may send a request to the pastor candidate's church of membership requesting his ordination. An alternative method would be for the calling church to organize her own formal ordination service. It is a standard procedure to invite ordained men from churches of "like faith and order" to participate in the ordination. This will help others in the local and nearby associations become more familiar with the new pastor. The date, time, and purpose of ordination should be given on the invitation.

At the beginning of the ordination procedure, all present for the service usually meet in the sanctuary, while all ordained men are invited to retire to a separate room to organize the ordaining council (also called a "presbytery").

The moderator or moderator pro tem of the host church should call the ordaining council to order and call for an opening prayer. He should then lead in the election of an ordaining council moderator. The elected moderator will then direct the business of the ordaining council.

It is customary to honor any requests the candidate has made for ordaining council positions in the service.

Besides the moderator, the following should be elected or designated:

- ***Clerk*** – to record minutes of the ordination proceedings; these should be read when the ordaining council reconvenes in the worship center;
- ***Someone to formally introduce*** the candidate to the ordaining council. This person should be quite familiar with the one to be ordained;
- ***Someone to question (examine)*** the candidate concerning his salvation, call to ministry, and doctrine. The ordaining council may also pose questions;
- After the questioning and the ordaining council is satisfied with the answers, ***someone from the ordaining council should be designated to offer a motion*** to recommend to the local church to proceed with the ordination;
- The ***local church should then vote to authorize*** the ordaining council to continue with the ordination;
- ***Someone should be elected to lead an ordination prayer.*** This individual should kneel with him during this prayer; the other members of the ordaining council should also assemble and kneel for prayer around the candidate;

- Following the ordination prayer, ***each member of the ordaining council can lay hands on the candidate*** as he continues to kneel. A brief prayer should be offered and words of encouragement may also be shared. After each ordaining council member lays hands on the candidate, he should sign the ordination certificate as a witness to the event;
- ***Someone should be elected to preach a sermon*** and give a charge to the candidate. The man being ordained or the ordaining council may do this.
- After the message, it is customary for the ordaining church to present a Bible to the newly ordained man and spend time in fellowship with one another.

Deacon Purpose and Qualifications

Qualifications for the Deacon

The qualifications for a deacon are outlined in I Timothy 3:8-13.

- Deacons are to be the husband of one wife and to have their houses in order.
- He should be morally honest and pure.
- He should also be Spirit-filled and sensitive to the Spirit's leadership.
- Deacons are to serve and provide for the material needs of the church, provide for the pastor, and care for widows and fatherless children.

Purpose of the Deacon:

The purpose of deacons in New Testament Churches is to serve others. They are to assist pastors by taking pressure and time required for special components of the Lord's work off pastors so the pastors' time may be given to prayer and proper preparation of the study of God's Word (Acts 6). Deacons are never to rule over a church. They have no more authority than any other member, but they do have more responsibility. They should not be referred to as a "board" of deacons since it may imply deacons have some ruling authority or power over the church (Acts 6, 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Ordination Procedure for Deacon

Deacons should be selected by a church on an as-needed basis among qualified men in the church. Candidates for the office of deacon are selected by the church. Qualities to consider: include those found in Scripture in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3. Potential deacons should be men who are faithful and exemplary in their attendance, stewardship, and willingness

to serve our Lord and others and have proved themselves over an appropriate course of time before being considered.

It is generally a good rule to set aside deacon candidates for a period of time before their ordination. This may be a set time (perhaps 3 to 6+ months) for the congregation to determine the candidate meets the biblical qualifications *before* ordaining these men. Refer to the ***Ordination Preparation Exam*** in this book for help with this.

It may prove helpful for the deacon candidate to assist established deacons during this time as a sort of apprentice. This person could possibly be led in visiting widows, home-bound individuals or even assisting the pastor in administering the ordinances during this training time.

The deacon ordination procedure, or order of service, is similar in order to pastoral ordination.