

# **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PASTORS AND DEACONS?**

**What does the Bible say about a call to ministry?** A call to ministry is important to discern. All Christians are called to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) and to be equipped for such work through their local church (Ephesians 4:12). Here are some biblical truths to consider in evaluating God's call for you to serve within His kingdom: [www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-a-call-to-ministry](http://www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-a-call-to-ministry)

**What are the biblical offices within a church?** While all Christians are spiritually gifted by God for ministry work (Romans 12:6–8, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Corinthians 12:7–11, 28) “for the common good”, pastors and deacons are the two offices within the church. The term pastor is used synonymously with overseer, elder, and bishop across the Bible to describe the same role (example: Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, 28). Their qualifications and purposes are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The qualifications and calling of deacons are listed in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The office of pastor is distinguished from the office of deacon in function by the call for pastors to be the teachers and authoritative leaders over a local church.

**Is it ok to call a woman in ministry “pastor” as long as she doesn’t teach men or exercise leadership authority over men? (i.e. Children’s Pastor, Women’s Pastor, etc.?).** It is confusing and unhelpful to use a title that does not correspond most accurately with the functions which which it is biblically connected (teaching and authoritative leadership over the church).

**Isn’t it chauvinistic and misogynistic to not allow women to serve equally in the church?** Christians cannot be true believers and have hatred towards women. There is no place for chauvinism in the church, even if the culture surrounding it condones such practice. In many cultures and seasons of history women have (and continue to be) mistreated and disrespected. It is a wicked lie to believe, teach, or treat women as inferior to men.

We need to treat women with respect, created in the image of God with equal value and worth as men. We need women and need them to use their God-given gifts within the church. The bible gives countercultural prominence to the value, worth, & purposes of women and so should we.

**What does the Bible say about a woman serving as a pastor/overseer/elder/bishop or deacon? What does the Bible say about a woman serving as \_\_\_\_\_?**  
The Bible is clear that the office of pastor is reserved for men and rooted in God's order for creation. It only describes men as serving as deacons and holds that only men should teach and lead over other men. See [www.trustworthyword.com/women-pastors](http://www.trustworthyword.com/women-pastors) to see a more thorough response..

**What does the Bible say about divorced men serving as pastors and deacons?**  
The qualifications for pastors and deacons describe who someone is currently, not merely what they had done in their past. See [www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-divorced-men-serving-as-deacons](http://www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-divorced-men-serving-as-deacons).

## Top Bible Passages to Consider

**A simple reading of the below passages will be the most helpful answer to understanding the qualifications, role, and functions of pastors and deacons:**

1 Timothy 2:8-15 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; [9 ] likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, [10 ] but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. [11 ] Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. [12 ] I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. [13 ] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14 ] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. [15 ] Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:8-15 ESV)

1 Timothy 3:1–7 “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. [2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? [6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” (ESV)

1 Timothy 3:8–13 “Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. [9] They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. [10] And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. [11] Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. [12] Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. [13] For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, [34 ] the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. [35 ] If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”

Acts 14:23 “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Acts 15:6 “The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.”

Acts 20:28 “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

Philippians 1:1 “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: (ESV)

1 Timothy 4:14 “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.”

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1 Timothy 5:17 “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

Titus 1:5–9 “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—[6] if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. [7] For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, [8] but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. [9] He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

1 Peter 5:1–5 “So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: [2] shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. [5] Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

#### **Helpful Resources:**

- **“What does the Bible say about a call to ministry?”** [www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-a-call-to-ministry](http://www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-a-call-to-ministry)
- **“What does the Bible say about divorced men serving as deacons?”** [www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-divorced-men-serving-as-deacons](http://www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-divorced-men-serving-as-deacons)
- **“What does the Bible say about women as pastors?”** [www.trustworthyword.com/women-pastors](http://www.trustworthyword.com/women-pastors)

## Elders/Overseers/Bishops/Pastors/Shepherds – 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9

- *Presbyteros, poimainō, episkopos*
- 1985 ἐπίσκοπος [episkopos /ep•is•kop•os/] n m. From 1909 and 4649 (in the sense of 1983); TDNT 2:608; TDNTA 244; GK 2176; Seven occurrences; AV translates as “bishop” six times, and “overseer” once. 1 an overseer. 1A a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian or superintendent. 1B the superintendent, elder, or overseer of a Christian church.
  - 1909 ἐπί [epi /ep•ee/] prep. A root; GK 2093; 895 occurrences; AV translates as “on” 196 times, “in” 120 times, “upon” 159 times, “unto” 41 times, “to” 41 times, and translated miscellaneously 338 times. 1 upon, on, at, by, before. 2 of position, on, at, by, over, against. 3 to, over, on, at, across, against.
  - 4649 σκοπός [skopos /skop•os/] n m. From skeptomai (to peer about [“skeptical”], perhaps akin to 4626 through the idea of concealment, cf 4629); TDNT 7:413; TDNTA 1047; GK 5024; AV translates as “mark” once. 1 an observer, a watchman. 2 the distant mark looked at, the goal or end one has in view
  - 1983 ἐπισκοπέω [episkopeo /ep•ee•skop•eh•o/] v. From 1909 and 4648; TDNT 2:599; TDNTA 244; GK 2174; Two occurrences; AV translates as “look diligently” once, and “take the oversight” once. 1 to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for. 1A of the care of the church which rested upon the elders. 1B to look carefully, beware.
  - 2176 ἐπίσκοπος (episkopos), ου (ou), ὁ (ho): n.masc.; = DBLHebr 7212, 7213, 7224; Str 1985; TDNT 2.608—1. LN 35.43 guardian, supervisor, keeper (1Pe 2:25+); 2. LN 53.71 church leader, overseer (Ac 20:28; Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:7+)
- 4245 πρεσβύτερος [presbyteros /pres•boo•ter•os/] adj. Comparative of presbus (elderly); TDNT 6:651; TDNTA 931; GK 4565; 67 occurrences; AV translates as “elder” 64 times, “old man” once, “eldest” once, and “elder woman” once. 1 elder, of age., 1a the elder of two people. 1b advanced in life, an elder, a senior. 1b1 forefathers. 2 a term of rank or office. 2a among the Jews. 2a1 members of the great council or Sanhedrin (because in early times the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from elderly men). 2a2 of those who in separate cities managed public affairs and administered justice. 2b among the Christians, those who presided over the assemblies (or churches) The NT uses the term bishop, elders, and presbyters interchangeably. 2c the twenty four members of the heavenly Sanhedrin or court seated on thrones around the throne of God
  - πρεσβύτερος (presbyteros), ου (ou), ὁ (ho): n.masc. [BAGD adj.] [served by 4565]; = DBLHebr 2418; Str 4245—1. LN 9.31 old man (Ac 2:17+); 2. LN 53.77 an elder, community leader (Mt 15:2; Ac 11:30; Ac 14:23; 1Ti 5:17, 19; 2Jn 1; 3Jn 1; Jn 8:9 v.r. n.rsv) - LN 11.84 group of (Christian) elders (1Ti 4:14+)
- 4166 ποιμήν [poimēn /poy•mane/] n m. Of uncertain affinity; TDNT 6:485; TDNTA 901; GK 4478; 18 occurrences; AV translates as “shepherd” 15 times, “Shepherd” twice, and “pastor” once. 1 a herdsman, esp. a shepherd. 1a in the parable, he to whose care and control others have committed themselves, and whose precepts they follow. 2 metaph. 2a the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church. 2a1 of the overseers of the Christian assemblies. 2a2 of kings and princes. Additional Information: The tasks of a Near Eastern shepherd were: 1) to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep; 2) to defend the sheep from attackers; 3) to heal the wounded and sick sheep; 4) to find and save lost or trapped sheep; 5) to love them, sharing their lives and so earning their trust. During World War II, a shepherd was a pilot who guided another pilot whose plane was partially disabled back to the base or carrier by flying alongside him to maintain visual contact.
  - 799 ἀρχιποίμην (archipoimēn), ἐνος (enos), ὁ (ho): n.masc.; = Str 750; TDNT 6.485—LN 44.5 the Chief Shepherd, the head over other elders, overseers and pastors (1Pe 5:4+)
  - 4478 ποιμήν (poimēn), ἐνος (enos), ὁ (ho): n.masc.; = DBLHebr 8286; Str 4166; TDNT 6.485—1. LN 44.4 shepherd, the Shepherd (Mk 14:27; Heb 13:20; 1Pe 2:25); 2. LN 53.72 minister, pastor (Eph 4:11+)
- 1320 διδάσκαλος [didaskalos /did•as•kal•os/] n m. From 1321; TDNT 2:148; TDNTA 161; GK 1437; 58 occurrences; AV translates as “Master (Jesus)” 40 times, “teacher” 10 times, “master” seven times, and

“doctor” once. 1 a teacher. 2 in the NT one who teaches concerning the things of God, and the duties of man. 1a one who is fitted to teach, or thinks himself so. 1b the teachers of the Jewish religion. 1c of those who by their great power as teachers draw crowds around them i.e. John the Baptist, Jesus. 1d by preeminence used of Jesus by himself, as one who showed men the way of salvation. 1e of the apostles, and of Paul. 1f of those who in the religious assemblies of the Christians, undertook the work of teaching, with the special assistance of the Holy Spirit. 1g of false teachers among Christians.

- o 1437 διδάσκαλος (didaskalos), ου (ou), ó (ho): n.masc.; = Str 1320; TDNT 2.148—LN 33.243 teacher, instructor (Mt 10:24, 25; 23:8; Jn 1:38; 13:13, 14; 20:16; Ac 13:1; 1Co 12:28, 29; Eph 4:11; 2Ti 4:3; Heb 5:12; Jas 3:1; Jn 8:4 v.r.)

#### [Qualifications for Overseers]

[3 :1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. [2 ] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3 ] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4 ] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5 ] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? [6 ] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7 ] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

(1 Timothy 3:1-7 ESV)

#### [Qualifications for Elders]

[5 ] This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— [6 ] if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. [7 ] For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, [8 ] but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. [9 ] He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

(Titus 1:5-9 ESV)

*Strong, James: The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. G4245*

*Swanson, James: Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament). electronic ed. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. DBLG 1356, #2*

## Deacons/Servants – 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-7

- 1249 δίακονος [diakonos /dee-ak-on-os/] n m/f. Probably from an obsolete diako (to run on errands, cf 1377); TDNT 2:88; TDNTA 152; GK 1356; 31 occurrences; AV translates as “minister” 20 times, “servant” eight times, and “deacon” three times. 1 one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master, a servant, attendant, minister. 1a the servant of a king. 1b a deacon, one who, by virtue of the office assigned to him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use. 1c a waiter, one who serves food and drink
  - 1356 δίακονος (diakonos), ου (ou), ó (ho) and ή (hē): n.masc. and fem.; = Str 1249; TDNT 2.88—1. LN 35.20 servant, one who serves, without necessarily having the office of deacon (Mt 20:26; Ro 16:1; Eph 6:21; 1Th 3:2 v.r.), for another interp of Ro and Eph, see next; 2. LN 53.67 deacon, one entrusted to serve the needs of believers (Php 1:1; Ro 16:1; Eph 6:21; 1Ti 3:8, 12), for another interp of the Roman’s & Ephesian’s passage, see prior

### [Qualifications for Deacons]

[8 ] Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. [9 ] They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. [10 ] And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. [11 ] Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. [12 ] Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. [13 ] For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

(1 Timothy 3:8-13 ESV)

### Seven Chosen to Serve]

[6 :1] Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. [2 ] And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. [3 ] Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. [4 ] But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” [5 ] And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. [6 ] These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

[7 ] And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

(Acts 6:1-7 ESV)

## **Women in Ministry**

– 1 Timothy 2:8-15 , Titus 2:3-5, Romans 16:1, 1 Corinthians 11:3,8,11-13,16 ;14:33-35

[8 ] I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; [9 ] likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, [10 ] but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. [11 ] Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. [12 ] I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. [13 ] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14 ] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. [15 ] Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:8-15 ESV)

[3 ] Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4 ] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5 ] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (Titus 2:3-5 ESV)

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, (Romans 16:1 ESV)

[3 ] But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3)

[8 ] For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. (1 Corinthians 11:8)

[11 ] Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; [12 ] for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. [13 ] Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? (1 Corinthians 11:11-13)

[16 ] If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God. (1 Corinthians 11:16 ESV)

[33 ] For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, [34 ] the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. [35 ] If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1 Corinthians 14:33-35 ESV)

### **Are all Christians called to ministry?**

(2 Corinthians 5:18-20 ESV) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Acts 1:8

Matthew 28:

### **What is the difference between serving in ministry and pastoral ministry?**

#### **Can women be ordained or serve in pastoral ministry?**

#### **Isn't this just an issue of different interpretations and understandings of Scripture?**

The office, role, and function of the pastorate is distinguished by its teaching and leadership authority over men within the local church. That functionally means that men are called by God to be set apart as the pastoral leaders and teachers within a church body. The Bible is extremely clear on the issue, demonstrating that this is not merely an issue of differing opinions, understandings or interpretations.

### **What are the biblical qualifications for the office, role, and function of the pastor or elder?**

### **What about people who feel the desire and “calling” to serve as a pastor and deacon?**

Many define their calling by their subjective feelings and experiences rather than by the objective truth of the Scripture. The Bible must be our guide and authority on such questions and issues. A perceived internal call must also be confirmed by a church's external call in accordance with God's biblical standards for the offices of pastor and deacon.

### **Should I address my pastors or deacons with special titles or greetings?**

### **What should I do if my denomination or church ordains, elects or selects a woman to serve in the office, role, or function of pastor?**

### **If I disagree biblically with women serving in a pastoral role, should I address a female pastor as “pastor”, “reverend”, or some other pastoral title?**



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## **Elder/Shepherd/Pastor/Overseer/Bishop – God’s Call has Standards.**

- “<sup>2</sup>Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup>not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup>He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. <sup>5</sup>(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) <sup>6</sup>He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. <sup>7</sup>He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.” 1 Timothy 3:2-7 (also Titus 1:6-9)

John Bisagno – *Letters to Timothy* - “Find God’s tailor-made will for you and do it...Don’t be deterred. If God has called you, God will use you...don’t drift from your call. Better to be on a side street in Calcutta in the will of God than in the White House in Washington, D.C., out of his will. If you’re called to be a servant of the king, don’t stoop to be president. The body of Christ has many parts and many different kinds of folks, and the toes are just as important as the hands.” (38)

Curtis C. Thomas – *Practical Wisdom for Pastors: Words of encouragement and counsel for a lifetime of ministry* (21)

### **Six Questions to Consider:**

1. “Does the man reach out for the work?”
2. “Is he qualified biblically?”
3. “Does he possess the gifts necessary to fulfill the functions?”
4. “Do the elders and the church think he is gifted and morally qualified?”
5. “Are his life and doctrine sound?”
6. “Will he live as an example before the flock?”