

# **Jesus Is Building His Church**

## **How Does Jesus Organize His Church?**

*Selected Scriptures*

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# How Does Jesus Organize His Church?

## Introduction

For the past few Sundays we have been studying the topic of the church.

I have been preaching a short series of sermons titled, “Jesus Is Building His Church.” We examined the nature of the church, and made distinctions between a true and a false church.

Today, I want to examine briefly how Jesus organizes his church. Jesus organizes his church into officers (which consists of elders and deacons) and the congregation.

It is our great joy today to ordain and install a man who has been duly elected by the members of this congregation into the office of deacon.

## Lesson

So, let us examine how Jesus organizes his church into elders, deacons and the congregation.

### I. Elders

Acts 14:21-23 records the ordination of elders in the early church:

<sup>21</sup> When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. <sup>23</sup> 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.

How does God reveal to the church who the elders should be

so that the church can ordain them? This passage suggests that prayer and fasting are part of it.

But in the end, the church must determine who God desires to serve as leaders based on a set of biblical qualifications that are clearly delineated in the word of God.

Elders are not primarily chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the business world, their financial ability, their prominence, or even their innate ability as leaders.

They are chosen because God has called and prepared them for the leadership of the church. The men whom God selects will meet the biblical qualifications.

And what are the biblical *qualifications* of an elder? First Timothy 3:1-7 lists what is required of an elder:

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

What, then, are the *duties* required of an elder? Acts 20 gives us a look at the elders in Ephesus. In verse 28 Paul says, "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." An elder who rules the church must evaluate not only his own life, but also the spiritual needs of his flock.

Our *Book of Church Order* (8-3) specifies the duties of an elder in the following words:

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It belongs to the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to their charge, that no corruption of doctrine or morals enter therein. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the church generally when called thereunto. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. They should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the church. They should set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples. All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties. They should pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock.

These, then, are the qualifications and duties of an elder.

## II. Deacons

Acts 6:1-7 introduces us to a group who many believe to be the first deacons. Though these men are never specifically called deacons, they are certainly an appropriate model for deacons. Apparently, it was sometime after this that the office of a deacon was officially recognized in the church. Acts 6:1-7 says:

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

In the earliest days of the church, the apostles led the church at Jerusalem. Eventually it was necessary for them to delegate some of their responsibilities to other spiritually mature Christian men. That enabled the apostles to concentrate on prayer and teaching, while the deacons concentrated on meeting the people's physical and material needs.

The *qualifications* for a deacon are set out in 1 Timothy 3:8-13:

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

What are the *duties* of a deacon? Although the duties of a deacon are given in Scripture, and particularly in Acts 6:1-7, let me summarize the biblical duties of a deacon in the words of our *Book of Church Order* (9-2):

It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. It is their duty also to develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the con-

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gregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church edifice and other building belonging to the congregation. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation.

These, then, are the qualifications and duties of a deacon.

Before I turn our attention to the congregation, I want to make a comment about the nature of ordination, particularly as it relates to tenure.

The *Book of Church Order* (24-7) says, in part, “Ordination to the offices of ruling elder or deacon is perpetual; nor can such offices be laid aside at pleasure.” Men who are called to serve as ruling elders or deacons are ordained into that office for *life*.

However, there will be times when a man will question his calling. There will be times when things get tough, and he may wonder whether or not he should continue to serve in the office to which he has been called and ordained. It is at those times that you need to remember that it is *God* who has called you to that office.

Serving as an officer in the Church of Jesus Christ can be very difficult at times. And yet, it is at those times of difficulty that you officers need to remind yourselves, clearly and plainly, that it is the Lord of the Harvest who has called you to serve him.

### **III. The Congregation**

For those of you who have been thinking, “That’s right, elders and deacons, get to work!”—now it’s your turn!

Whereas the basic task of church leadership is to teach sound doctrine and explain how it applies to daily life, the basic task of the members is to learn that doctrine and apply it to their daily lives.

The congregation is the object of the leaders’ ministry. Perhaps someday as a result of that ministry, members of the church will become deacons, elders, or even missionaries and pastors.

We all start at the same point—somewhere in the congregation. Those who are faithful with small tasks can be entrusted with larger responsibilities.

The congregation is the part of the church that is to do “the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12). Hebrews 13:17a identifies the general obligation of a congregation: “Obey your leaders and submit to them.” Assuming that the leadership of the church is Spirit-directed, the members of the congregation are to obey them because they are ministering on behalf of Christ as his undershepherds. The congregation is to subject itself to their godly ministry, although they may not understand it all, and may even disagree sometimes with what the elders are attempting to do. The church’s obedience is a living testimony to the world.

There are many things that hurt a church and destroy its testimony. The primary one is poor leadership or false teachers who fail to build the church on the word of God.

Another thing that weakens a church is a congregation that won’t follow its leadership. That causes church splits as well as other problems that are exposed to the full view of the world. Every church member must keep in step with the Spirit and be faithful and obedient.

## **Conclusion**

I thank God for the men he has raised up to serve as officers in this church. Let me assure you that God has raised up excellent and godly men to serve him as officers here at the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church.

Will you pray that God would use them to serve him faithfully as Christ builds this church for his glory?

And will you also pray that God will help you and every member of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church to keep in step with the Spirit and be faithful and obedient to Jesus Christ? Amen.





# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons)
2. [www.sermoncentral.com/contributor\\_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181](http://www.sermoncentral.com/contributor_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181)
3. [www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz](http://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz)

Please give your input and leave your feedback at websites 2 and 3 when requested to do so. This helps with evaluation and planning of sermons.

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**PRAAYER:**

Our Father, we thank you that Jesus is building his church. Thank you that Jesus is building his church here at the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church.

We are grateful that Jesus organizes his church with elders, deacons, and members of the congregation.

We thank you for the officers that Jesus has called to serve him here at the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church.

We particularly thank you for the deacon, Kevin Lucht, whom you have called to serve you as a deacon in this congregation.

Help all of us to honor Jesus by serving faithfully in the particular calling that Jesus has placed upon each of our lives.

And all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.