

How Do Men Prepare Themselves to Become Deacons and Elders?

by Bryan Gibson

Yes, you must get married and have children (1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5, 12; Titus 1:5-6), but most men do that anyway. The real question is how do men prepare themselves **spiritually** to become deacons and elders? It will take work, even hard work, but it's not as complicated as you might imagine.

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)—fulfill that command and you're well on your way. And you fulfill that command by obeying another one: “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). The produce (fruit) from this study and growth is further defined in this passage: “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-8). Study, grow, bear this kind of fruit, and you can't help but meet at least the character qualifications for a deacon or elder.

Here's another way to look at it. To become an elder or deacon, simply work hard to meet the goals God has established for **every** Christian. You can find these goals throughout the New Testament, but Colossians is a particularly rich source. “We...ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might...for all patience and longsuffering with joy...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel...that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 1:9-11, 23; 4:12).

Three observations from the verses cited above. **First**, as you continue to grow and become “fruitful in every good work,” that will necessarily involve everything to do with the work and worship of the local church. You don't go from being someone who simply occupies a pew to being an elder or deacon. Yes, bear fruit in your daily life, but also be actively involved in every good work in which the church is involved. **Secondly**, pay particular attention to the importance of “being grounded and steadfast.” Elders and deacons should be men of conviction, not men who are “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). Develop some stability and consistency to your faith, and you should make a fine elder or deacon. **Thirdly**, you won't ever grow in the manner described in these passages until you completely “put to death” those things opposed to Christ (Colossians 3:5). These things will stifle your growth, and you won't ever be prepared.

What kind of men make good elders and deacons? “Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6).