

Paul's pastor qualification list is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.

These passages demonstrate three distinctions that are important in understanding the difference between the office of pastor and deacon. Keep in mind that when you read the New Testament, authors use the terms *overseer*, *pastor*, and *elder* interchangeably to refer to the *one* office of church leadership.

A PASTOR IS A TEACHER.

- 1 Timothy 3:2: A pastor must be able to teach.
- 2 Timothy 1:14: A pastor's calling is one of preaching and teaching God's word in such a way that guards the good deposit (the gospel) through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Though we have a narrative account in Acts 8 of a deacon (Stephen) who instructed others in the faith, nowhere does Scripture *require* public teaching as a responsibility of a deacon.
- Titus 1:9 and 1 Timothy 3:9: Remaining faithful to the clear teachings of Scripture is required of *both* pastors and deacons. The implied reason being that neither would deviate from gospel faithfulness. The added reasons of exhortation and refuting false teaching are applied *only* to the pastor.

A PASTOR IS AN OVERSEER.

- 1 Timothy 3:1: The office of a pastor is also referred to as 'an overseer' which captures well another distinct role from the role of a deacon.
- 1 Peter 5:2-3: Peter affirms this distinction as he encourages his fellow elders (pastors) to shepherd the flock by 'exercising oversight' eagerly, sacrificially, and humbly.
- A deacon's primary role is that of service. This is not to say that deacons do not oversee certain ministries, nor does this imply that pastors should not serve, but this refers to the primary biblical role of each office where pastors exercise oversight (lead, oversee, administrate) over matters within the local church and deacons lead in service.

A PASTOR IS A SHEPHERD.

- 1 Peter 5:2: Peter encourages elders (pastors) regarding their primary calling—shepherding the flock.
- 1 Peter 5:4: The office of a pastor is an extension of the care of the Chief Shepherd.
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7: Most of the qualifications of the pastor demonstrate the heart of a shepherd who should be willing to lay down his life for his flock. Although there is shepherding involved in the role of a deacon at times, the primary gifts needed in a deacon are serving roles that meet the physical needs of a church.
- Acts 6:1-7: Though the men selected to serve the widows by the Apostles in are not called deacons, they present a helpful framework of the role of deacons that is established later in the church.
- 1 Peter 5:1-4 and Hebrews 13:17: Deacons will not give an account to the Chief Shepherd for the souls of their flock. The office of the pastor is the only office that assumes this responsibility.

Each of these two biblical offices (pastor and deacon) have unique and important roles designed by God in the church. The absence of one or the other will leave a gap that cannot rightfully be filled by a gifted teacher, committee, or board.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR A DEEPER DIVE

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/is-there-a-difference-between-pastors-and-elders-1-timothy-3/> (article)

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-role-of-an-elder> (article)

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/whats-difference-elders-deacons/> (video)