

# CHURCH AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP

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The purpose of this document is to express first the doctrinal beliefs of Veritas Church in regards to the *Church* and *church leadership*. The secondary purpose of this document is to express the practical out-workings of this defined theological position.

## The Church

The Church (Greek *ekklesia*) is not an event or venue. The Church is a people; *God's people* who love and trust him (i.e. faith). Specifically, the church is the people who, for and from all time, have been divinely chosen (election by God the Father), reconciled (atonement by Jesus the Son) and loved (effectual grace by God the Spirit) into loving and trusting God (1 John 3:16).

The Church, then, is global (people from all places) and timeless (people from all times). Therefore, when we call Veritas a "church," we mean a local community that is representative of a global and timeless community – people gathered here in Roseville who have been divinely loved into loving and trusting God.

*Ephesians describes the church as God's new humanity, a colony in which the Lord of history has established a foretaste of the renewed unity and dignity of the human race...a community in which God's power to reconcile men and women to himself is experienced and then shared in transformed relationships...It is an outpost in a dark world...offering light to the lost...The church is a bride being prepared for the approach of her lover and husband.<sup>1</sup>*

*Every Christian should have his church enclosed within his heart, and be affected with its maladies, as if they were his own, -sympathize with its sorrows, and bewail its sins.<sup>2</sup>*

## Church Leaders

God is King, and *all people*, being created, sustained, and directed by Him, are under his authority. The Church is under this authority *willingly* and *joyfully* while those who don't love God are under this authority *unwillingly* and, often, *ignorantly*.

Through Jesus (the one who made the church possible), God brought organization and structure to the Church in the form of official, human, sub-leadership. This leadership is called "sub-leadership" because human church leaders are always subordinate to Jesus, who is the senior leader of the church (1 Peter 5:4; 1 Peter 2:25; Colossians 1:18). Jesus is the one who builds, rules, sustains, directs, and, if necessary, closes the doors of a church (Matthew 16:18; Revelation 2:5).

Under Jesus, are under-shepherds called elders. And under elders, are servants called deacons. Deacons are men and women who officially serve the elders, enabling the elders to focus on the task of leading the church under the direct authority of Jesus. Elders and Deacons alike are those who live exemplary lives, taking initiative and responsibility in the church, for the good of the people and for the glory of God.

### 1. ELDERS

#### 1.1 What is an elder? (Theology)

Elders are the male leaders of a church, in submission to Jesus, who bear the primary responsibility of overseeing the doctrinal soundness and faithfulness of the people God has entrusted to them.

##### 1.1a Etymology (word study)

There are two words used synonymously in the New Testament to describe the office of elder. They are *episkipos*, usually translated "overseer," and *presbuteros*, usually translated "elder" (see below). There are also various words used to describe the roles these officers fulfill, including

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible, page 1903

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's Wisdom*, by Graham Miller, page 56

“pastors,” “laborers,” “shepherds,” “servants,” and “teachers.” (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

*Presbuteros:*

**1 Timothy 5:17**

The *elders* who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Also: Acts 11:30; 15:2; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1

*Episkipos*

**1 Timothy 3:1**

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an *overseer*, he desires a noble task. Also: Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:7

## 1.2 What are the qualifications of an elder?

Because an elder should be imitated by people in a church (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 5:4; Hebrews 13:7) it is imperative that he be a holy man with godly character. As well, an elder will be responsible for leading others, so he must prove himself to be a man who leads well and whom people will follow. We go to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for a detailed list of these qualifications.

1. **Above Reproach** (*Anegkletos*)  
**1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6; Job 1:1-3**  
Unaccused; conduct and character has not been called into question.
2. **Temperate** (*nephaleos*)  
**1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Peter 5:8**  
Used in regards to sobriety. Most likely it's used metaphorically here (sober in views, judgments, behavior, etc.). This is a spiritually stable man.
3. **Respectable** (*kosmios*)  
**1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 2:9**  
Good behavior, orderly, and honorable.
4. **Hospitable** (*philoxenos*)  
**1 Timothy 3:2; Job 31:32**  
Kind to strangers.
5. **Able to teach** (*didaktikos*)  
**1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9-16; Joshua 1:1-9; 2 Timothy 2:1-2; Ezra 7:10**  
The ability to master Christian doctrine, to evaluate it in others, to teach it, and to debate it with those who teach falsehood.
6. **Not addicted to wine** (*paroinos*)  
**1 Timothy 3:3; 1 Corinthians 6:12-13**  
Not an addictive person. No known idols. Not seeking relief, comfort, or pleasure in anything more than Jesus.
7. **Not Pugnacious** (*plektes*)  
**1 Timothy 3:3**  
Striker, brawler, violent.

8. **Gentle** (*epieikes*)  
**1 Timothy 3:3; James 3:17; 2 Corinthians 10:1**  
 Forbearing, gracious, conciliatory, magnanimous; patient with the ignorance and weakness of fallen man.
9. **Free from love of money** (*philarguros*)  
**1 Timothy 3:3; Hebrews 13:5**
10. **Not Overbearing** (*authades*) (also relates to role as father and husband)  
**Titus 1:7; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 3:7**  
 Self-willed, self-pleasing, selfish.
11. **Not Quick-tempered** (*orgilos*) (also relates to role as father and husband)  
**Titus 1:7; Proverbs 29:22; James 1:19-20**  
 Not easily angered.
12. **Not fond of dishonest gain** (*aischrokerdes*)  
**Titus 1:7; Mark 11:15-17**
13. **Lover of what is good** (*philagathos*)  
**Titus 1:8; Job 4:3-4**  
 Promoter of virtue.
14. **Just** (*dikaios*)  
**Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 3:18; Job 29:14-17**  
 Righteous, upright man.
15. **Devout** (*hosios*)  
**Titus 1:8; Genesis 39:7-12**  
 Committed, trustworthy, steadfast, consistent, and dependable.
16. **Self-Controlled or Disciplined** (*egkrates*)  
**Titus 1:8; 1 Corinthians 7:9; Proverbs 25:28; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 5:23**  
 Self-discipline, self-control, self-restraint, self-governance.
17. **Committed to the Word of Truth (Gospel)** (*antecho*)  
**Titus 1:9; 1 Timothy 4:1; Acts 20:28-31; Galatians 1:9; Titus 2:1**  
 A man who knows and understand the gospel, defends it, promotes it.
18. **Not a new convert** (*neophutos*)  
**1 Timothy 3:6; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Proverbs 16:18**  
 Baby Christian; young in maturity, not age.
19. **Husband of one wife**  
**1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6; 1 Peter 5:4**  
 This does not mean a man must be married (Paul, Timothy, and Titus were not), or that he can't be a remarried widower (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-3).  
  
 The order of the Greek is **One** (*mia*) **Woman** (*gune*) **Man** (*aner*) - emphasis is on "one."  
 In other words, he should not be flirtatious, promiscuous, over-involved with women, and he can't have multiple wives (Genesis 2:20-25; 1 Kings 11:3).
20. **A man who manages his household well** (*proistemi*)  
**1 Timothy 3:4-5; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21**  
 A man cannot lead God's family if he can't lead his own family. A man cannot lead the big church if he can't lead his little church.

21. **Faithful children** (*pistos*)  
**Titus 1:3; 1 Corinthians 4:17**  
 If this man has children at home, they are respectable, obedient, self-controlled believers.
22. **A man with a good reputation** (*marturia*)  
**1 Timothy 3:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; Titus 2:5,8; 1 Peter 2:12,15; 3:16; Colossians 3:22-23**  
 Wise in his interaction and conduct with non believers.

### 1.3 What does an elder do? (Practical Theology)

- 1.3a **An elder, as an *under-shepherd*, follows the example of Jesus, the *chief-shepherd*.**  
 A pastor (i.e. elder) follows the example of Jesus as our great prophet, priest, and king. And so a good elder preaches the Word (prophet), shepherds the people (priest), and rules well, organizing and making decisions for the good of the people and the glory of God (king). The speech and conduct of an elder should be exceptional, thereby making him an example to the flock (Hebrews 13:7).

#### 1. Elders promote and defend sound doctrine.

##### (Jesus is *Prophet* – Elder is *preacher*)

Because an elder bears the primary responsibility for the doctrinal soundness and faithfulness of a church, an elder must be a man who roots everything he says and does deeply in the Word of God. As a trencher uses a shovel and a logger uses an axe so an elder uses his Bible (1 Timothy 4:2-3).

Only by wielding this weapon will an elder be equipped to fulfill his responsibility practically through preaching, teaching, training, shepherding, rebuking, praying, and confronting (Deuteronomy 8:3; 1 Timothy 3:16; Acts 6:4; 15; Acts 20:17,28; James 5:14; Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 1:1; 5:1).

#### 2. Elders manage and organize the church in a God-glorifying direction.

##### (Jesus is *King* – Elder is *overseer*)

Elders serve under the authority of Jesus and are appointed as the men who will be held primarily responsible for the health and faithfulness of the church (Hebrews 13:17). Because elders bear the primary responsibility they are given the authority to lead, initiate, and make decisions on behalf of the church (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Acts 6:1-3).

As a husband serves and leads his family, so an elder serves and leads his church family. 1 Timothy 3 makes it clear that before a man can become an elder, and manage a church family, he must prove himself to be a good manager of his own family (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

#### 3. Elders care for people in the church and pray regularly for them.

##### (Jesus is *Priest* – Elder is *shepherd / pastor*)

It is the responsibility of an elder to draw on the strength he receives from Christ and to care patiently, gently, and mercifully for the flock that is under his care (Ezekiel 34:4; 1 Peter 5:2-3; James 5:14; Acts 20:28).

Ideally, an elder has a specific area of oversight (i.e. worship, children, community, mission, administration). Within this context he would be responsible for ensuring organization, sound doctrine, and pastoral care. This will be a heavy load and so the hope is that this elder can be compensated financially for what he does.

## 1.4 How does a man become an elder at Veritas Church?

### 2 overarching principles

- Jesus calls, qualifies, and equips a man for the job.

#### **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.

- Existing elders surface, train, test, and install these men as elders.

**First**, potential elders must be surfaced. In other words, church leaders and church members need to recognize and recommend men who they believe may be called to and qualified for eldership in the church. This may be conversation that is initiated by an elder to another man, saying something like “Have you considered pursuing eldership.” Or, a potential candidate may initiate this conversation to an elder, saying something like “I’m interested in pursuing eldership.”

**Second**, an elder candidate must join the Veritas Fight Club. VFC is a men’s group that meets for the better part of one year, focusing on the theology of the gospel and biblical manhood.

**Third**, in conjunction with his participation in VFC, an elder candidate will be partnered with an existing elder who will be primarily responsible for training and evaluating this man throughout the year, considering whether or not he is called, qualified, unified, and competent. This process will include accountability, discipleship, and written assignments. As well, the elder candidate will be asked to develop, throughout the evaluation period, a plan for how his gifts and strengths will be used to teach, manage, and shepherd the church body.

**Fourth**, at the conclusion of the evaluation period, the elder candidate’s family (if applicable) will be interviewed before a final recommendation is made by the current elder board. If a man is approved he will be presented to the congregation and begin serving in this capacity immediately and indefinitely.

## 2. DEACONS

### 2.1 What is a deacon? (Theology)

Deacons are pastoral assistants, qualified to lead and care for God’s people. From a heart that desires service, deacons use their gifts to oversee practical ministry within the church, freeing the elders to focus on prayer and ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-7).

“Practically, elders and deacons work together like left and right hands, with elders specializing in leading by their words and deacons specializing in leading by their works.” (Mark Driscoll; page 51, “On Church Leadership”).

#### 2.1a The Non-Existent Office<sup>3</sup>

Across the landscape of American evangelicalism, one must look long and hard to find a church that has a thriving diaconal ministry. The average church may have multiple staff, an elder board, and “directors” overseeing various aspects of ministry, but rarely does one find deacons listed among the leadership.

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<sup>3</sup> “Deacons: A Theological Study” by Robert Thune, Coram Deo Church

Some churches have self-consciously removed the office of deacon altogether. Other churches have kept the language of deacon while divesting the office of its biblical functionality. Many Southern Baptist churches, for instance, are governed by a “deacon board” that more closely resembles a nonprofit corporate board than a biblically qualified diaconate.

It is a fair conclusion to say that by and large, the biblical deacon is a non-existent office in the American church. Though Scripture clearly teaches that such an office exists and should be filled by mature, qualified Christians, it seems that modern churches have deemed it unnecessary.

### 2.1b Why Biblical Deacons Matter<sup>4</sup>

When they ignore the biblical teaching regarding deacons, churches end up creating positions of leadership that carry no biblical authority. A survey of the average church’s leadership structure will reveal titles like “Children’s Ministry Director” or “Women’s Ministry Director” or “Lay Counselor.” The people who serve in these roles are often involved in significant biblical teaching and discipleship and pastoral care. But what biblical precedent do these titles have? What criteria can we hold these individuals to? If we allow these sorts of roles to fall under the purview of deacons, then God’s people have a clear set of biblical qualifications and expectations for their leaders. If, however, we create titles and ministry positions according to the need of the moment, the long-term result will be a weakening of the authority of Scripture as man-made roles take the place of God-ordained offices.

If we seek to build churches that are faithful to the teaching of Scripture and aggressive about engaging the culture around them, we must renew our biblical understanding of deaconship and its place in Christ’s church.

### 2.1c Servants vs. Officeholders<sup>5</sup>

The term *diakonos*, like many biblical words, has both a broad general meaning (*servant*) and a specific technical meaning (*deacon*). Most of the instances of *diakonos* in the New Testament have the broader sense. In other words, they are *not* referring to the specific office of deacon, but rather to the general role of helping or serving. The context determines how the word is used. Consider the following instances:

**John 2:9:** “...The master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants (*diakonoi*) who had drawn the water knew.”

**Luke 22:25-27:** “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them... But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves (*diakonon*)... I am among you as one who serves (*diakonon*).”

**John 12:26:** “Whoever serves (*diakone*) me must follow me; and where I am, my servant (*diakonos*) will also be. My Father will honor the one who serves (*diakone*) me.”

**Romans 13:4:** “[The ruler] is God’s servant (*diakonos*) to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant (*diakonos*), an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”

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<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> ibid

**Eph 3:7:** “I became a servant (*diakonos*) of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given to me through the working of his power.”

1 Timothy 4:6: “If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister (*diakonos*) of Christ Jesus...”

In all of these cases, *diakonos* expresses some nuance of the general term “servant.” However, the same Greek word is used in a more technical sense in certain places in the New Testament to describe the formal office of deacon. The latter use is found in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

**Philippians 1:1:** “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the **overseers** and **deacons**...”

**1 Timothy 3:8-13:** “**Deacons** likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as **deacons** if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let **deacons** each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 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.”

So the term *diakonos* has both a broader meaning (*servant*) and a narrower meaning (*deacon*). A deacon is a servant of Christ and His church. But not everyone who serves God or the church does so in the official capacity of deacon. In other words: *while every deacon is a servant, not every servant is a deacon.*

## 2.1d Did the office of deacon exist in the NT church?<sup>6</sup>

At least two lines of evidence lead us to conclude that the New Testament mandates the *office* of deacon.

First, in both Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3, deacons are mentioned in close connection with the elders. There is no doubt that the New Testament sees eldership as a formal office, instituted by the apostles to provide doctrinal oversight and shepherding care to the churches (see Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Titus 1:9). Barnabas and Paul “appointed elders... in every church” (Acts 14:23). Paul commanded Titus to “appoint elders in every town” on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5). Scripture clearly lists qualifications that every potential elder must meet (Titus 1; 1 Timothy 3). But right after the list of elder criteria in 1 Timothy, we read, “Deacons, likewise...” The mention of deacons in such tight connection with eldership and the fact that deacons must meet a list of qualifications in order to serve strongly suggest that deacon, like elder, was a formal office in the New Testament churches.

Second, Acts 6:1-4 shows an apostolically authorized division of labor in the church that lays the groundwork for the offices of elder and deacon.

*Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to*

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

*neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

The twelve apostles, charged with the proclamation of the gospel, were instead being burdened with the practical difficulties of mercy ministry. They made a decision to delegate this important aspect of ministry to "seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," freeing the apostles to focus on prayer and preaching. The noun diakonos is never used here, so we should not see these seven men as "the first deacons." The apostles are not establishing the formal office of deacon. However, they are making a distinction in roles that influences the organization of churches in the later New Testament.

Luke introduces the narrative in Acts 6 with the pregnant phrase, "At this time... the disciples were increasing in number" (Acts 6:1). As the church in Jerusalem grew, the apostles found themselves unable to carry the burden of both theological and practical leadership. So they lightened their load by delegating important ministry tasks to proven men who demonstrated appropriate character and gifting.

It seems highly probable that as Paul and his companions planted churches, they followed the apostolic pattern in Acts 6. They started by appointing qualified men to fill the most important office: elders who would teach Scripture and guard the integrity of the gospel. They expected those elders to follow the pattern of Acts 6, teaching the Bible, growing the church, and eventually delegating some aspects of ministry to qualified disciples. This explains Paul's emphasis on appointing elders first (Titus 1:5), the sequence of 1 Timothy 3 (elders, then deacons) and the differing requirements for each office. "When the churches were young, Paul appointed overseers, not deacons. But in the more established churches of Philippi (Phil 1:1) and Ephesus (1 Tim 3:8-13) there were both overseers and deacons. Perhaps the latter office developed on a church-by-church basis as the size and needs of the church increased."<sup>7</sup>

Because of the strong textual connection between deacons and elders, and because of the echoes of an Acts-6-style division of labor in the churches of the New Testament, we conclude that the New Testament mandates the office of deacon in the local church.

## **2.2 What does a deacon do? (Practical Theology)**

A deacon's role will often depend on the current needs of the elders and; thus, the current needs of the church. While some deacons may have specific, unchanging areas of oversight, the role of others may be more fluid, shifting as the needs of the church shift.

### **2.2a**

#### **Deacons oversee practical ministry.**

These practical ministries may include, but are not limited to: church administration, finances, hospitality, publications, media, janitorial, physical needs of church, mission trips, etc.

## **2.3 What are the qualifications of a deacon? (1 Timothy 3:8-12)**

### **1. Dignified**

Worthy of respect, honorable, noble, highly esteemed; men whom younger Christians want to be like.

### **2. Not double-tongued**

Literally "not double-spoken;" honest and truthful; careful in speech; sincere; genuine

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<sup>7</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 163.

**3. Not addicted to much wine**

No addictions; self-controlled in habits

**4. Not greedy for dishonest gain**

Not greedy; not “in it for the money” (i.e. aren’t serving in hopes of eventually getting paid by the church)

**5. Must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience**

Hold to sound theology; understand the gospel; no discrepancy between what they profess and how they live

**6. Must first be tested and found blameless**

Proved faithful over time; stand up under examination

***Additional requirements for women deacons:***

**1. Women who are dignified**

Worthy of respect

**2. *Not* malicious talkers**

Not slanderers or gossips

**3. Sober-Minded**

Temperate; clear-minded; self-controlled in habits

**4. Trustworthy in everything**

Totally reliable; doing well in all life roles (wife, mother, etc), faithful

***Additional requirements for married male deacons***

**1. A one-woman man**

“A one woman man,” devoted in heart and mind and body.

**2. Manages his children and household well**

Leads, manages, and provides for his family; kids respect and obey their father .  
To cause children to obey in a graceful manner. “

**2.4 May a woman be a deacon? <sup>8</sup>**

- A. The question of whether women should serve as deacons is a hotly debated one. The Bible renders no conclusive judgment on the matter. Romans 16:1 uses the word *diakonos* to describe a woman named Phoebe: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant [*diakonos*] of the church in Cenchrea.” But Bible scholars are divided over whether we should see Phoebe as a “deaconess” (office) or simply as a “servant” (role).
- B. Either way, good exegesis precludes us from arguing conclusively for female deacons from only one verse. So to answer the question of whether women can be deacons, we must take into account the broader teaching of Scripture concerning men’s and women’s roles in the church.
- C. It is the position of Veritas Church that women can and should serve as deacons, provided that the church is led by properly qualified biblical elders. This position seems to

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<sup>8</sup> ibid

best allow for the diverse gifting of godly women while still honoring male headship in the family and the church. The following lines of reasoning support this conclusion.

- *The only office specifically restricted to men in the Bible is eldership.* Because of the headship established by God in the creation order, Scripture teaches that women must not lead authoritatively in the church.

*Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (1 Tim 2:11-14).*

Though these verses are complex, the scope of the current study allows for only a brief explanation. Women are prohibited from “teaching or exercising authority over a man.” In the context of 1 Timothy, this seems to be a restriction on *authoritative* leadership in the church. Women are certainly not prohibited from knowing the Bible and teaching it to others. Scripture even records instances of women being involved in the discipleship of men (for example, Priscilla and Aquila’s teaching of Apollos in Acts 18:23-28). Taken in light of the rest of the New Testament, this passage in 1 Timothy is not restricting women from *all* types of teaching and leadership in the church. But it *is* restricting women from *authoritative* teaching and leadership in the church, which is the role of the elders. Scripture demands male elders in order to preserve the biblical roles of headship and submission that are expected of men and women in the home and the church: “The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23). Female deacons operating under a plurality of male elders maintains this creation order.

- *The biblical qualifications for eldership are specific to men, while the qualifications for deacons include women.* The elder criteria listed in 1 Timothy 3 are specific to men (for example, “husband of one wife”). The list of deacon qualifications, however, includes qualifications for either female deacons or the wives of deacons: “Their wives [lit. *women*] likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (1 Tim 3:11). Since eldership is the highest office in the church, it would be strange for God to require something of deacons’ wives that he does not require of elders’ wives. So it seems that these verses are referring to female deacons and not to deacons’ wives.
- *The office of deaconess arose very early in church history.* Appeals to history are secondary to biblical exegesis. But it is instructive to note that the earliest churches had no problem with appointing female deacons. “It is indisputable... that an order of deaconesses did quickly arise in the church.”<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, one of the dominant church fathers of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (c. 349-407), understood 1 Timothy 3:11 to refer to “those who hold the rank of deaconesses.”<sup>10</sup> In cultures which were strongly patriarchal, the early fathers of the church saw the appointment of deaconesses neither as a threat to male headship nor as an affront to Scripture.
- In light of this biblical and historical evidence, it is our conviction that the church is to be led by biblically qualified male elders who then appoint both male and female deacons to assist with the many practical areas of pastoral ministry. Women can and should serve as deacons under the oversight of a plurality of male elders.

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<sup>9</sup> Beyer, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Oden, 175

## **2.5 How does someone become a deacon at Veritas Church?**

- 1.** Start serving.
- 2.** It is the responsibility of the elders to surface people who are already taking responsibility, serving the elders, and overseeing practical ministry.
- 3.** While there may be many who are serving within ministry, it is the elder's discretion to appoint specific servants into an office where they will be directly accountable to an elder and publicly recognized as a leader in office.
- 4.** A deacon candidate must be evaluated and determined to be qualified, unified with the elders, and competent.
- 5.** Servants who have met all criteria will be installed with direct accountability to an elder