

Theoacademy

**BEING PRESBYTERIAN**  
**PREPARATION FOR ORDERED MINISTRY**

Session 1: Ordered Ministers

# Theocademy

A ministry of the  
Synod of Mid-America

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# Getting started

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**Before watching the video, consider the following questions.**

- Why did I agree to be a Ruling Elder/Deacon?
  
- What strengths do I bring with me to this role?
  
- In what areas (faith, knowledge, personal habits, etc.) can I still grow?

# During the video

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**After you watch the video, answer the following questions.**

- Why can the terms “clergy” and “laity” often be problematic?
  
- Who do Presbyterians believe God has called to ministry? How do “Ordered Ministers” play into that?
  
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each type of Ordered Minister within the church?
  - Teaching Elder:

- Deacon:
  
- Ruling Elder:
  
- What is the “first job” of Ordered Ministers within the church?

## Who are we as Ordered Ministers?

We all know from experience – any time you try to coordinate the lives and efforts of any more than a handful of people, you need to have leaders. And the characteristics of an “effective” leader vary with the job that s/he is called to do, as well as the kinds of people that s/he has been chosen to lead. If you’ve been called to serve as an Ordered Minister of this congregation, you’ve been around the Church and Christianity long enough to realize that you’re not just taking on any leadership role. If we really affirm that our faith affects *all* the areas of our lives, then we’ll start to realize that our understanding of the Christian faith and our character as Christ’s followers matter just as much as our actions as churchgoers. The US Army has developed a three-pronged leadership paradigm that encapsulates this perfectly: **Be**, **Know**, and **Do**.<sup>1</sup>

**BE.** *The values and attributes that shape a leader’s character. It may be helpful to think of these as internal qualities: you possess them all the time, when you’re alone and when you’re with others. They define who you are; they give you a solid footing. These values and attributes are the same for all leaders, regardless of position, although you certainly refine your understanding of them as you become more experienced and assume positions of greater responsibility.*

**KNOW.** *People willingly follow only those who know what they are doing. One of the quickest ways for a leader to lose the trust and commitment of followers is to demonstrate incompetence. This does not mean that the leader must have all the answers. Far from it. It does mean that the leader must have a certain level of knowledge and mastery of... key skills.*

**DO.** *Leaders act; they do. They bring together everything they are, everything they believe, and everything they know how to do to provide purpose, direction, and motivation. Leaders... work to influence people, operate to accomplish the mission, and act to improve their organization.*

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<sup>1</sup> Army, U. S., Frances Hesselbein, Eric K. Shinseki, Richard E. Cavanagh, and & 1 more. 2004. *Be, Know, Do: Leadership the Army Way: Adapted from the Official Army Leadership Manual*. 1st edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Leader to Leader Institute.

So, exactly what *kinds* of things are Ordered Ministers supposed to Be, Know, and Do? Thankfully, we have a wealth of resources to help us figure that out. In the first few decades of the fledgling church's existence, the Apostle Paul gave his protégé Timothy the following directives for the selection of elders and deacons:

<sup>1</sup>The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop [*elder, overseer*] desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup>Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, <sup>3</sup>not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup>He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way-- <sup>5</sup>for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? <sup>6</sup>He must not be a recent convert, or he may be 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 and the snare of the devil.

<sup>8</sup>Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; <sup>9</sup>they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup>And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. <sup>11</sup>Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup>Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; <sup>13</sup>for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

**1 Timothy 3:1-13, NRSV**

The PC(USA) *Book of Order* also gives the following guidance:

#### **G-2.02 DEACONS: THE MINISTRY OF COMPASSION AND SERVICE**

*G-2.0201 Deacon Defined.* The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.

*G-2.0202 Under Authority of the Session.* Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. In either case, their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session. Deacons may also be given special assignments in the congregation, such as caring for members in need, handling educational tasks, cultivating liberality in giving, collecting and disbursing monies to specific persons or causes, or overseeing the buildings and property of the congregation. Deacons shall assume other duties as may be delegated to them by the session, including assisting with the Lord's Supper. (W-3.3616). A congregation by a majority vote may choose not to utilize the ordered ministry of deacons. If the congregation has neither a board of deacons nor individually commissioned deacons, the function of this ordered ministry shall be the responsibility of the ruling elders and the session.

#### **G-2.03 RULING ELDERS: THE MINISTRY OF DISCERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

*G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined.* As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders, and they are eligible for any office.

After reading the descriptions of ordered ministry in Timothy and the Book of Order, what took you by surprise? What things did you agree or disagree with? Why?

As you read through these descriptions, hopefully some “bes,” “knows,” and “dos” popped out at you. On your own or with a partner, choose one descriptor per Be/Know/Do category from each source. (Focus specifically on the office to which you’ve been called.) Think about why that particular descriptor is important in the life of an Ordered Minister, and then consider how that characteristic might affect your life as an elder or deacon.

	Source	Descriptor	Why It’s Important	What It Looks Like In My Life
Be	1 Timothy 3			
	Book of Order			
Know	1 Timothy 3			
	Book of Order			
Do	1 Timothy 3			
	Book of Order			

## Guidance for the journey

Interview a “veteran” elder or deacon. Use these questions to get the ball rolling; feel free to add others of your own that might help you better to understand your role and calling. Afterwards, reconvene as a group and share your findings.

- What are the most important lessons you’ve learned during your time as a deacon/elder?
  
- How have you seen God use you during your time as an elder/deacon?

- What surprised you the most about the role? What weren't you expecting?
  
- What advice would you give me as a deacon/elder?

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## Personal reflection

After the session, complete the following statements.

- I can offer my \_\_\_\_\_ in service to God as an Ordered Minister.
- God can use me to effect \_\_\_\_\_ in the life of this church.
- Learning more about \_\_\_\_\_ can help me be an effective Ordered Minister.