

“Husband of One Wife”

1 Timothy 3:2

I Above Reproach: A person of such character that no one can properly bring a charge against his unfitness.

II “Husband of one wife”

1 These words are translated man/husband and woman/wife numerous times in NT.

2 One is in the emphatic position

	guna	anar
mias	gunaikos	andra
Of one	Woman or wife	Man or husband

III Different Translations

1 NAS, “the husband of one wife”

2 NIV, “the husband of but one wife”

3 KJV, “the husband of one wife”

4 NKJV, “the husband of one wife”

(1) Clearly, the phrase has to do with marital status as a component of the qualification of the man since the major translators *all* translate it using the terms husband/wife instead of man/woman.

A It includes more than his marital status, but it does include that.

IV Different interpretations:

1 Polygamy

(1) Not the problem in the cultures of this time

(2) Not addressed in the New Testament

(3) Patently unacceptable

2 Spouse dies (held by some of the early church leaders)

(1) Romans 7: 1-6 makes it clear it does not refer to this

3 Must be married (No single pastors)

(1) Emphatic position of one rather than just a wife seems to preclude that interpretation.

(2) Paul probably single, I Corinthians 7: 7-8 (although apostle not a pastor)

4 Not divorced

(1) Some are not divorced but are not one-woman men.

(2) If this is all that was meant, could have used the word ἀφίημι^e; χωρίζω^b; ἀπολύω^d; λύσις, (1Cor. 7:11, 13; 7:15; Matt 5:31; 1Cor. 7:27 respectively)

5 One wife presently

(1) Positive

- A Grammatically consistent
 - a **This discussion cannot be solved by grammatical considerations alone.**
- B Emphasizes being devoted to his present wife
- C Argues divorce does not, necessarily, disqualify a man
- D Emphasizes that not being divorced does not fulfill the qualification
- E Seeks to emphasize forgiveness, grace and compassion.
- F Many reputable men hold this view.

(2) Considers possible exceptions for precluding a divorced candidate

- A Spouse committed adultery or deserted
- B Spouse exonerates candidate
- C No other complication, e.g. children by prior marriage
- D Time that has elapsed
- E Extenuating circumstances
- F Time he has been married

(3) Weakness

- A Equals devoted to one wife at a time. In other words, one could have been married and divorced multiple times and not be disqualified as long as he is devoted to his present wife.
 - a Therefore, unless one is willing to accept endless numbers of divorces without disqualifying a man, the distinction between this position and Position #6, “husband devoted to one wife for life” hinges on how many divorces does it take to disqualify a man. Because neither position says non-divorce alone qualifies a man.
 - (A) Hence, this view ends up requiring a limited number of marriages, at a minimum, for being qualified to be an elder; where as position #6 says none are allowed.
 - (B) In addition, if one holds to the “presently devoted position” they still must answer the following:
 - (a) Divorced before saved, whose fault, any children; divorced pre ordination, post ordination, while occupying the office; and what does it take to restore, how much damage to the body is enough, etc.
- B This seems to devalue the sanctity of lifelong marriage.
- C It undermines the modeling role of the shepherd.
- D Makes being forgiven equal to being qualified
- E Makes being “innocent” in the divorce equal to being qualified to be an elder
- F Makes being a pastor have no higher qualifications than serving in any leadership position in the church.
 - a For example: They argue it means not flirtatious, not having roving eyes, or not really devoted to his present wife, etc. Then, does this mean that someone can

work as a teacher, usher, youth director, etc., who is flirtatious, has roving eyes and is not committed to his/her marriage?

- b Doesn't it make perfect sense that those who are charged with watching over the souls of the redeemed (Hebrews 13:17) have higher qualifications than a nursery worker?

6 One wife for life

(1) Marriage creative institution, not ecclesiastical

- A Matthew 19:3 – Question debated between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, later Rabbi Akiba
- B vs. 4-6 - Jesus responded based on creation (Pre Mosaic Covenant) vs.7-9 – Exception: immorality (adultery, etc.)
- C vs. 10 - Disciples understand
- D Not adultery then perpetual adultery (one plausible interpretation)

(2) Example of Leaders having higher and different qualifications than others

- A Priestly office of Old Testament—Leaders (Leviticus 21:5-15)
 - a Leviticus Vs. 5 - Long hair and beard restriction
 - b Vs. 7 - Wife not harlot or divorced
 - c Vs. 9 - Actions of the daughter of a priest profaned the priest and cost her life.
 - d Vs. 10- High Priest not allowed to tear his clothing, uncover his head, or approach the dead, even if an immediate family member
 - e Vs. 13- High Priest only marry a virgin; hence, not a widow or divorcee
 - f Vs. 17 - Can't serve with defect: lame, blind, disfigured, broken foot, etc.
- (A) The reason for these prohibitions: “that he may not profane his offspring among his people: for I am the Lord who sanctifies him” (Leviticus 21:15)
 - (a) Flaws in Leviticus had nothing to do with -
 - i God's love or forgiveness
 - ii Whether you were out of covenant—prior to circumcision
 - iii Born blind or became blind
 - iv Time frame - Genesis 2 was the standard
 - v The desire, abilities, productivity or spirituality of those disqualified
 - vi The marriage restrictions are higher than anyone else
 - vii Things beyond the priest's control disqualified him e.g. disfigurements
 - viii Sins before he was a priest were not excluded.
 - (i) Paul would have been familiar with the high standards for those who minister on God's behalf.

7 Other leaders had standards

- a Kings - Proverbs 31
- b Nazarite vow, Numbers 6:2-21
- (A) He could not drink wine or eat grapes or even raisins.
- c Apostles - had to see the risen Lord

- (A) While not stated as a requirement, it is interesting that none had been divorced and they were all Jews.

8 Issue is not forgiveness but glorification and qualification

- (1) Adam and Eve - banished but forgiven
- (2) Moses –forgiven but could not lead the people into the Promised Land
- (3) Saul was forgiven but no longer qualified to be king

9 One woman man

- (1) One wife husband
- (2) One wife for life - Genesis 1 & 2
- (3) Required for everyone - Malachi 2:16
- (4) Violation is sin in the real world - Matthew 19
- (5) Marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5: 25-2 7). If the leaders do not mirror it, then where will the picture be seen?
- (6) Church and marriage analogy based on creation not Christianity (Genesis 2:25, Ephesians 5:31)

10 The office is higher than the person

- (1) Standards always higher for leaders than those led
- (2) Responsibility and influence greater
- (3) Potential for dishonoring and corrupting is greater; hence, more stringent standards
- (4) One wife at a time seems to be lowering God’s standard from Genesis
- (5) Many are devoted to each woman they are with for a season, but that seems to be no more of a standard than the worst narcissistic pagan would have.

11 Divorce and timing

- (1) Pre conversion
- (2) Post salvation - Pre ordination
- (3) Post ordination

A All are debated

12 God’s sovereignty can protect those He chooses to be Pastors

13 Teach by example

- (1) Teach individual family relationships
- (2) Teach church family relationships
- (3) A church family is more complex than an individual family, and if he can’t manage the smaller, how will he manage the larger?

A “Faithful with little, give charge over much” Luke 19:17

14 Jesus’ words (standards) conflicted with culture

- 15 The issue of being married multiple times not disqualifying is, generally speaking, only a question since the modern acceptance of the redefinition of family, morals, divorce, etc.
- 16 Previous wives could attack and undermine the credibility of the highest offices in the church.
- 17 What about children by a prior marriage who do not fulfill Titus 1:6?
 - a (Elders only)
 - b If children live with ex-spouse, how can he fulfill the commands concerning his children? (1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 1:6)
- 18 You cannot know all of the facts concerning present divorces much less those of the past.
- 19 Divorce
 - (1) Allowed but not counseled (Grace)
 - A Adultery - Matthew 19:9
 - B Desertion - I Corinthians 7:15
- 20 Remarriage
 - A Deuteronomy 22: 22-24 - Stone
 - B Romans 7: 2-3 - Not obligated after death
 - C I Corinthians 7 - Called to peace
 - a *Grace for the guilty party does not then punish the innocent with celibacy
- 21 Various considerations
 - (1) Never will know full circumstances of most divorces,
 - (2) There are many other areas to serve
 - (3) Will it hurt the reputation of church?
 - (4) Will it set a bad example for those who stay married?
 - (5) David was a king, not a pastor (This is not a qualification for a king, like a broken foot disqualified a priest, but not us). It was a sin but not disqualifying.
 - (6) What about committing adultery in ministry - divorce and remarry a new woman/man?
 - (7) What about moral failure of pastors and deacons?
 - (8) Standards for the highest office - set standards by derivation for all lower offices
- 22 Some sins have continuing consequences: Proverbs 6:30-33, v33 says concerning the adulterer, "Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out."
- 23 Why is a command to be devoted to one's wife needed since that is obviously true for

every Christian?

- 24 Character is not the only thing being addressed, e.g. the requirement “able to teach”. Even the phrase, “husband of one wife” does not seem limited to character, but surely can *include* status. Moreover, it seems that while the two are not necessarily connected, they are often actually connected.
- 25 The desire to show grace and compassion to people who are hurt or limited by sin can:
- (1) Cause one to lower God’s standard, which has the effect of impugning God with being uncompassionate.
 - A This is seen in issues as different as pastoring, capital punishment, jurisprudence, welfare, etc.
 - (2) Diminish what the call to practical holiness means, which necessarily and concomitantly diminishes the very grace and compassion one is seeking to demonstrate.
 - (3) Cause one to forget that this exclusion, if valid, only prohibits serving in two offices, which leaves open countless other places of service.
 - (4) Miss that a man unwilling to live under this restriction may be demonstrating an unwillingness to live under other perceived overly restrictive injunctions, e.g., women pastors
 - (5) Diminish the distinction between being forgiven or able and being qualified or allowed by God.
 - A Adam and Eve were able to eat of the prohibited tree, but can and should are not the same.
 - B Moses was forgiven for smiting the rock, but not qualified to lead the people into the Promised Land; forgiven and qualified are not the same.
 - a The equating of forgiven, able, desiring, etc, with should is the same fallacy that is used to justify women pastors, pastors who commit adultery being quickly restored, etc.
 - (A) Because God allows for divorce (the innocent can get divorced) does not mean that they should or that I can counsel them to—which the Bible never commands me to do.
- 26 The two following quotes sum up my basic position.
- (1) “...it could be that a pastor was to be chosen from men who even before their salvation had not been divorced, so that their lives were the proper model of God’s marital ideal.”¹
 - (2) “Prior wives or offspring would, then, have no opportunity to compromise, confuse, or attack the credibility of the highest office in the church and destroy the

¹ *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, John MacArthur, p. 89.

reputation of the man by saying things about him. Certainly the task of building godly marriages and strong families in the church necessitated the most impeccable marriage history in the pastor's life. A man who had never been divorced but had been married singularly, to the same woman would be the kind of premium example God would want of one man and one woman together in harmony for life. *That is just a starting point, however.* There are a lot of men who have had only one wife but are not one-woman men (Matt. 5:27-28). They are the husband of one but the lover of two or three more. *In its primary aspect, a one-woman man simply means a man who is devoted to the woman who is his wife. His eyes and heart remain focused on her. The issue is not just to avoid getting a divorce at all costs. It is that of continuing faithfulness to one's wife.*

This world overflows with sexual sin, and Paul directs the church to find as leaders men who have *impeccable reputations*. Is the man under consideration without blame in that he has been and now is loyal to the woman who is his wife? Does he have a sexual career in his past that has perhaps come to a screeching halt lately, but most everybody around town knows about it? *This is not a man who can stand up and say, 'Here, beloved, is God's divine model.'* *The issue is moral character, not marital status.*

The pastor must have a reputation of being sexually pure. If he is married, he is devoted to his one wife, not scandalized by past mistresses, illegitimate children, or present adulteries. *He loves and desires only one woman and has been faithful to her.*

This is the kind of man God is looking for to step up as the model in His church. That does not mean such men are better than others—that they are more spiritual, more gifted, or more used of God than other men. It does mean, however, *that they fit a unique role. **No one else is suitable according to God's Word.***² (emphasis added)

² Ibid p. 90. There is more on the following pages that elucidate the importance of this point.