

forsaken but the man who is remarried cannot become the husband of one wife. A man may put a wife out of his house, but in most cases he cannot put her out of his life. There will always be a connection whether it be children, court proceedings, property, finances, etc.

What if a man's wife dies? The widower or widow is free to remarry because God counts them as if they had never been married. So, a man is not disqualified from the ministry if his wife dies and he marries again (**I Corinthians 7:39, Romans 7:1-3**).

THE QUESTION OF FORGIVENESS

Our subject has been the issue of qualification, not forgiveness of sins and salvation of sinners. Divorce is not an unpardonable sin. Divorced people are not second class Christians. Many good men have made mistakes and God is forgiving, please check the Scriptures. God forgave David of adultery even though David suffered physical consequences. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin (**I John 1:7**).

The only two positions divorced men are disqualified from are bishops and deacons. There are many types of Christian service they can do in the church.

In conclusion, what qualifies a man to preach? Is it desire? (**I Timothy 3:1**). Well, Moses desired to go into the promised land but was disqualified because of one sin in his life (**Deuteronomy 34:4**). David desired to build the temple, but God did not allow him to do so (**I Kings 5:3**). James and John desired to sit with the Lord in His kingdom when Christ would reign, but their desires were not according to the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit determines the qualifications for ministers. Just because a man can preach, quote the Bible, or has talent, does not qualify him as a bishop. There are a lot of self-appointed preachers in the ministry.

God says in **I Timothy 5:22**, "Lay hands suddenly on no man" showing that we are not to be hasty in the ordination of men to the ministry.

The RICHES OF GRACE

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"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

The Husband of One Wife

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife."

I Timothy 3:1-2

+ The Qualification of Preachers +

This article will consider one of the most controversial subjects in our generation: that is, the qualifications of preachers. Even though there is a long list of requirements a minister must meet, the phrase, "the husband of one wife," in **I Timothy 3:2**, has become one of the most disputed and misunderstood Scriptures in the church. The controversy over this passage is because of the increase of divorce and remarriage in recent years. In times past, most denominations refused to license or ordain men to preach with two living spouses, but not so today. This position was universal among Baptists until

"For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

M a l a c h i

2:16

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."



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*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"
Acts 16:31*

The Bible is the only rule book for the Christian and the church in all matters of faith and practice. We will let the Bible be its own dictionary when it comes to interpretation of certain words in comparing Scripture with Scripture.

THE OFFICES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

According to **I Timothy 3:1 and 8**, there are only two spiritual offices in the local church, the office of the bishop and the office of the deacon. When the apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi, he also addressed the bishops and the deacons (**Philippians 1:1**). A bishop is an overseer which has a leadership position and is to rule in the congregation. In the New Testament there are at least three different titles given to the one person who is in charge of the spiritual leadership of the church. They are the bishop, the pastor and the elder. The terms bishop and elder are often interchangeable (**Acts 20:17-18, 14:21-23, 15:1-2, I Peter 5:1-3**). So, a bishop or pastor is an ordained elder whose rule is spiritual. Other names given in Scriptures for the bishop are minister, overseer, and presbytery (**Ephesians 4:11-12, Acts 20:28, I Timothy 4:14, Colossians 1:7,25**). In **Acts 1:20**, the word bishoprick is used to describe the work of Judas Iscariot. He was not a pastor, but could be considered as an apostle and evangelist. The word bishoprick is translated from the Greek word episkope which is the same word translated bishop in **I Timothy 3:1**. This word bishoprick simply means office. This is confirmed in **Psalms 109:8**.

The other office in the church is a deacon. A deacon is a servant and is one who performs service other than the responsibilities of the pastor. In **Acts 6:1-6**, we have a good description of a deacon's job.

THE QUALIFICATION FOR PREACHERS

There are basically two interpretations of the phrase "the husband of one wife": it prohibits polygamy; or it excludes divorced men from the pastorate. The second is my understanding of the verse, and was commonly believed among saints down through the centuries.

The "husband of one wife" means having married only one wife. It literally means a "one woman man" and does not mean one at a time. Both bishops and deacons are to be monogamous and permanent in their marriage (**I Timothy 3:2, 12, Titus 1:6**). In **I Timothy 5:9**, the same term is found in reverse when speaking of the qualifications of a widow to be taken into the church for support, "the wife of one man". The "wife of one man" means that she has never remarried, that is, only been

married once. For, if she is remarried her second husband can take care of her and there is no need for the church to be responsible.

The qualifications for an evangelist or missionary are the same as the bishop or pastor. God would not require more of a deacon or widow than He would a preacher. There is not a separate list of qualifications for evangelists or missionaries. Therefore, a pastor who has failed in his marriage is also not qualified to be an evangelist, missionary, etc.

In **I Timothy 3:2**, the word one is used in two ways in the New Testament. In **Ephesians 5:31**, God says they two shall be one flesh, meaning one as opposed to two or three. But the word one in **I Timothy 3:2** means both numeral and first. In Strong's Concordance (#3391) the Greek word for one in **I Timothy 3:2** is "mia" (mee' ah). The word "mia" used here is more than a numeral. So, a man that has been married more than once cannot say he is married to his one or first wife.

What about **polygamy**? Many say that the phrase, "the husband of one wife" is referring to polygamy. The problem with this interpretation is that there is no mention in the New Testament that any Christian practiced polygamy. There is no evidence that the early church had a problem with it. If there had been a problem with polygamy at that time, the Lord and the apostles would have addressed it. There was a problem with the divorce and remarriage and it was addressed by the Lord Jesus and others (**Matthew 19:1-9, 5:31-32, Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18, I Corinthians 7:1-39 and Romans 7:1-3**).

Some will say that their divorce happened before they were saved, so it is under the blood, but the Bible makes no distinction as to whether the marriage failed before or after salvation. Getting saved does not change our earthly circumstances. A man saved in prison probably will not be released; or, a man saved with his liver destroyed from drinking is not promised a new liver or long life.

Keep this in mind, God has always expected more of his ministers than from the people. The higher the office, the higher the standards and the stricter the demands. In the Old Testament, the Lord expected more from the priest than from the people and even expected more from the High Priest than from the priest. In **Leviticus 21:6-8**, a priest could not marry a divorced woman and the High Priest could not marry a divorced woman or a widow. In **Ezekiel 44:21-23**, the average priest could marry a widow that had been married to a priest. The point I am trying to make is that the man of God is to be holy and blameless in his life (**I Timothy 3:2**). A divorced and remarried man is not above reproach (blameless) in the area of marriage. Many sins can be repented of and