

Doctrine of the Husband of One Wife

1 Timothy 3:2

1. In 1 Timothy 3:2 and its parallel passage Titus 1:6, one of the qualifications for being an Elder is to be "the husband of one wife."
 - *1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;*
 - *Titus 1:6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*
2. The phrase in the original is *mias* [of one] *gunaikos* [wife] *'andra* [husband]: "*of one wife husband*".
3. The same phrase is found in 1 Timothy 3:12 when referring to the qualifications of a Deacon.
 - *1 Timothy 3:12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*
4. It is not cleared if the injunction is a prohibition against the practice of having concubines, or polygamy, or remarriage after death or divorce.
5. Many conservative *Bible* scholars interpret the phrase to disqualify a man from being an Elder or a Deacon if a remarriage has taken place following a divorce.
6. During the second century opposition to a second marriage following a divorce became very strong by such groups and figures as the Montanists, Tertullian, and the Athenagoras who called a second marriage "*a specious form of adultery*."
7. Conservative Greek scholar, Kenneth S. Wuest addressed the controversial phrase in *Scripture* (Wuest's Word Studies, Vol. II. pp. 52-55). "Now to consider the meaning of the words, "the husband of one wife." The Greek is *mias* (one) *gunaikos* (woman) *andra* (man). The word "man" is not "*anthropos*", the generic term for man, but "*aner*," the term used of a male individual of the human race. The other two words are in the genitive case, while *aner* is in the accusative. The literal translation is, "a man of one woman." The words, when used of the marriage relation come to mean, "a husband of one wife." The two nouns are without the definite article, which construction emphasizes character or nature. The entire context is one in which the character of the bishop is being discussed. Thus, one can translate, "a one-wife sort of a husband," or "a one-woman sort of a man."

We speak of the Airedale as a one-man dog. We mean by that, that it is his nature to become attached to only one man, his master. Since character is emphasized by the Greek construction, the bishop should be a man who loves only one woman as his wife. It should be his nature to thus isolate and centralize his love. Does this mean that if the bishop is married, he is only to have one wife, not two, or does it mean that if his wife dies, he is not to marry again? As to the answer, we will let *Expositors*, Alford Vincent speak.

“The first two named believe that the words forbid a second marriage, and the last thinks that that is the probable meaning. As to the meaning that a bishop may have only one wife at a time, not two or more, Alford has this to say; "But the objection to taking this meaning is, that the Apostle would hardly have specified that as a requisite for the episcopate or presbyterate, which we know to have been fulfilled all the Christians whatever: no instance being adduced of polygamy being practiced in the Christian church, and no exhortations to abstain from it."

Expositors say, "The better to ensure that the *episcopus* be without reproach, his leading characteristic must be self-control. In the first place—and this has special force in the East—he must be a man who has—natural or acquired—a high conception of the relations of the sexes: a married man, who, if his wife dies, does not marry again. Men whose position is less open to criticism may do this without discredit, but the *episcopus* must hold up a high ideal.

Second marriage, which is mentioned as a familiar practice (Romans 7:2, 3), is expressly permitted to Christian women in 1 Corinthians 7:39, and even recommended to, or rather enjoined upon, young widows in 1 Timothy 5:14. "The words '*the husband of one wife*,' of course, do not mean that the *episcopus* must be, or has been married. What is here forbidden is bigamy under any circumstances. This view is supported

- by the general drift of the qualities required here in a bishop; self-control or temperance, in his use of food and drink, possessions, gifts, temper;
- by the corresponding requirement in a church widow, the wife of one man, and
- by the practice of the early church (apostolic Constitutions, VI 17: Apostolic Canons 16 (1&); Tertullian, Athenagoras, Origen, and the Canons of the councils.

On the other hand, it must be conceded that the patristic commentators on the passage suppose that it is bigamy or polygamy that is here forbidden. But commentators are prone to go too far in the emancipation of their judgments from the prejudices or convictions of their contemporaries. In some matters "*the common sense of most*" is a safer guide than the *irresponsible conjectures of a conscientious student.*"

8. Keeping caution in mind it should be noted that it is the temptation of the church in every generation to accommodate good people who come to Christ and desire to serve Him.
9. However well-meaning men who have been divorced and remarried, grace and dignity can be manifested by those who accept the Divine and apostolic prohibition to service in a particular area. God will still love and will still allow different manifestations of His faithfulness.

10. Those who do serve as Elders are to be honored for the Person they represent and for the position they hold.
 - *1 Thessalonians 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;*
11. Elders are to receive double honor by receiving respect and financial remuneration.
 - *1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*
12. Elders are to be remembered in prayer and emulated in as far as they reflect the Person of Christ.
 - *Hebrews 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*
13. Elders are invested with Divine and apostolic authority which demands a proper obedience from the members of the congregation.
 - *Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*
14. Disputes among the saints should be settled within the fellowship of the saints. This was true of the Old Testament as well as the New.
 - *Deuteronomy 17:8 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; 9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: 10 And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: 11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. 12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. 13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.*
15. The decisions of the New Testament Church government are binding for time and, when disciplines administered, for eternity.

- *Matthew 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*
 - *John 20:23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*
16. The Elders are the rightful heirs to apostolic authority in the local church to solve questions of doctrine.
- *Acts 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.*
17. Eldership rule in the early church was always a plurality.
- *Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.*
18. The primary task of the Elders is to feed the flock of God with the Word of Truth.
- *Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
19. There are specific qualifications for every person who holds the office of an Elder.
- *1 Timothy 3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

Qualifications of an Elder

1 TIMOTHY 3:1

A bishop

episkopos (ep-is'-kop-os); superintendent, i.e. Christian officer in charge of a (or the) church (literally or figuratively): bishop, overseer.

1 TIMOTHY 3:2

must be blameless

anepileptos (an-ep-eel'-ape-tos); not arrested, i.e. (by implication) inculpable: blameless, unrebukeable.

the husband

aner (an'-ayr); a man (properly as an individual male): fellow, husband, man,

of one

mia (mee'-ah); one or first: a (certain), + agree, first, one, X other.

woman

gune (goo-nay'); a woman; specially, a wife: wife, woman

vigilant

nephaleos (nay-fal'-eh-os); or *nephalios* (nay-fal'-ee-os); sober, i.e. figuratively circumspect: sober.

sober

sophron (so'-frone); safe (sound) in mind, i.e. self-controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion): discreet, sober, temperate.

of good

kosmios (kos'-mee-os); orderly, i.e.

behavior

decorous: of good behavior, modest.

given to

philoxenos (fil-ox'-en-os);

hospitality

fond of guests, i.e. hospitable: given to (lover of, use) hospitality

apt to

didaktikos (did-ak-tik-os');

teach

instructive ("didactic"): apt to teach.

not

me (may); a primary particle of qualified negation (adverbially) not,

given to wine

paroinos (par'-oy-nos); staying near wine, i.e. tippling (a toper): given to wine.

not a brawler

plektes (plake'-tace); a smiter, i.e. pugnacious (quarrelsome): striker.

not greedy of filthy lucre

aphilarguros (af-il-ar'-goo-ros); unavaricious: without covetousness, not greedy of filthy lucre.

patient

epieikes (ep-ee-i-kace'); appropriate, i.e. (by implication) mild: gentle, moderation patient.

not a brawler

amachos (am'-akh-os); peaceable: not a brawler.

not covetous

aphilarguros (af-il-ar'-goo-ros); unavaricious: without covetousness, not greedy of filthy lucre.

one who ruleth

proistemi (pro-is'-tay-mee); to stand before, i.e. (in rank) to preside, maintain, be over, rule.

well

kalos (kal-oc'e'); well (usually morally): (in a) good (place), honestly, + recover, (full) well

own

idios (id'-ee-os); of uncertain affinity; pertaining to self, i.e. one's own

home

oikos (oy'-kos); of uncertain affinity; a dwelling (more or less extensive, literal or figurative); by implication a family --home, house (-hold), temple.

1 TIMOTHY 3:5

children

teknon (tek'-non); daughter, son.

subjection

hupotage (hoop-ot-ag-ay'); subordination subjection

with all

pas (pas); all, any, every, the whole: all (manner of, means), always (-s),

gravity

semnotes (sem-not'-ace); venerableness i.e. probity: gravity, honesty.

1 TIMOTHY 3:6

novice

neophytos (neh-of'-oo-tos); newly planted, i.e. (figuratively) a young convert ("neophyte"): novice

1 TIMOTHY 3:7

but

de (deh); a primary particle but, and, etc. also, and, but, moreover, now [often unexpressed in English].

having

echo (ekh'-o); including an alternate form *scheo* (skheh'-o); used in certain tenses only); a primary verb; to hold (used in

good

kalos (kal-os'); properly, beautiful, (figuratively) good (literally or morally), i.e. valuable or virtuous, better, fair, good (-ly), honest, meet, well, worthy.

report

marturia (mar-too-ree'-ah); evidence given (judicially or genitive case): record, report, testimony, witness.

20. Elders are to be protected against slander and disrespectful comments and behavior.

- *1 Timothy 5:1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;*

21. Elders are not to be recognized officially too quickly.

- *1 Timothy 5:22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.*

22. Elders are ordained by other Elders and are to be recognized by the church.

- *Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*

23. Elders are to anoint the sick.

- *James 5:14 Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

24. Elders are not to be forced into an office they do not want nor are the Elders to be greedy for money.

- *1 Peter 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

25. Elders are also called "bishops" and "presbyters". The term bishop speaks of the function of an Elder while the term presbyter speaks of his honor and title of office.

- *Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
- *Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*
- *1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;*
- *Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*
- *1 Peter 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*