

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DIVORCED MEN SERVING AS DEACONS & PASTORS?

Many people have their own answer to this sensitive question, but have largely based their answer on experience and tradition rather than Scripture (Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13, & Titus 1:5-9). In light of the possibility of divorced or remarried deacons and pastors, the verses to consider are 1 Timothy 3:2 “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,” 1 Timothy 3:12, “Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children & their own households well,” and Titus 1:6 “if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife”

“Husband of One Wife” or “One Woman Man”? *The phrase “husband of one wife” in the Greek is better translated as “one-woman man” (i.e. a faithful husband):*

- The Greek word for “husband” (*aner*) is actually translated as “husband/husbands” 52 times and “man/men” 143 times in the New Testament (biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/aner.html)
- The Greek word for “wife” (*gune*) is actually translated as “wife/wives” 82 times and as “woman/women” 130 times in the New Testament (biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/gune.html)

Note the similar phrase in 1 Timothy 5:9-10 which considers which widows are worthy of being supported by the church. “Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.” (1 Timothy 5:9-10 ESV)

- Note that this is also a listing of characteristics that point towards her current faithfulness.
- Would a twice-widowed (i.e. widowed-remarried-widowed, a.k.a. wife of two husbands) woman not be considered for the care of the church?
- The “wife of one-husband” phrase is best understood as a “one-man woman” (i.e. a faithful wife).

5 Important Points About Which Men Can Serve As Deacons and Pastors (Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13, & Titus 1:5-9)

1. These biblical characteristics are all present-tense (verbs = Present-Active-Participles and Present-Active-Imperative)...i.e. “Who are they now?” NOT past-tense...i.e. “Who were they?” ***Christians are all considered by who they are now in Christ, not who they were (past-tense) in their sins. That stated, their past sin must not be so recent that they might not be considered “of good repute” (Acts 6:3).***
2. Would you ever select a former murderer as a deacon or pastor? *If not, you eliminate the Apostle Paul.*
3. Would you ever select a former thief as a deacon or pastor? *If not, you eliminate the Apostle Matthew, a tax collector who would’ve taken more than he legally needed to collect for taxes.*
4. Would you ever select a single man (unmarried, i.e. not a “husband”) as a deacon or pastor? *If not, you eliminate Jesus and the Apostle Paul.*
5. Would you ever select a widower or a remarried widower as a deacon or pastor (i.e. not a “husband” or a “husband of one wife”)?

IN SUMMARY... *The act of selecting a man to serve as deacon or pastor, who has been in any past sin* (to include remarriage after divorce...see Matthew 5:32, 19:3-12, Mark 10:1-12, Luke 16:18, 1 Corinthians 7:10,39, Romans 7:2-3), ***does not condone the sin, but recognizes God’s grace and faithfulness in the life of a believer over time.*** Christians are now considered dead to sin and alive in Christ (Romans 6:11) but yet we continue to struggle with sin (Romans 6:12-14, 7:15-20). Christians are consistently referred to as saints (Ephesians 1:1; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1 and many more)

while non-believers are identified by their sins (Romans 1:28-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). As servants in the church, deacons and pastors are called meet or display specific characteristics that evidence the fruit of God's Spirit within them (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). ***So in summary, a man's past divorce does not automatically disqualify him from the possibility of serving as a deacon or pastor.***