

General Topics :: Elder qualifications

**Elder qualifications - posted by JHerndon (), on: 2017/4/17 10:21**

I was wanting to get some different point of views on a conversation I recently had. What are some of your opinions on men who have been divorced becoming elders? The question comes from 1 Timothy 3:2 where the qualification listed is "the husband of one wife". This quote comes from the KJV. What are your thoughts?

**Re: Elder qualifications - posted by twayneb (), on: 2017/4/17 15:34**

I have studied this, and this is what I found. There are really two major opinions on the subject. First, that the husband of one wife means that the man could never have been married and then divorced. There are a few commentators who would agree with this. As I have read translations like Youngs Literal, I tend to think that this not what is meant, but rather the second major viewpoint.

The second major view is that this means that a man can only be the husband of one wife at a time. In the time period that this was written and in the culture it was not uncommon for a man to have more than one wife. Paul would be saying here that a man must only have one wife if he is to be considered an elder. It seems to me the wording of the verse fits this better.

Matthew Henry gives both opinions as viable options. Barnes does as well, as does Clarke and Gill.

I have known of several men in my life who were called of God to be elders in the church and some who have been called to be pastors, evangelists, teachers, etc., who have divorce in their past, just like I have known of many who are called who have had drunkenness in their past. Elders cannot be given to much wine just as they must only be the husband of one wife. But God's grace in forgiving and cleansing a drunk is just as effectual in forgiving and cleansing a divorcee.

That is the conclusion I came to.

**Re: Elder qualifications - posted by ThyKingCome (), on: 2017/4/18 13:52**

I am no scholar, but in considering the text I would also agree with viewpoint 2.

Men can find forgiveness, healing and grace in Christ to move forward and still be used of God. Not all divorce is avoidable. The view that divorce disqualifies someone indefinitely does not allow much room for putting it in the past or restoration.

Now, if a man has more than one wife, then it is a CURRENT abuse and disobedience to scripture, so the man then is presently disqualified because he is actively living in disobedience.

Now, that said the character of the men should be tested more thoroughly if he has divorce in his past, and it should be weighed in the decision.

**Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2017/4/18 14:38**

I believe the scripture concerned here is based on the situation in the Churches those days. Many pagans who had multiple wives would have turned to Christ and come to Churches. Hence Paul tells to appoint only men who have one wife.

I was raised as a Hindu till 25 years of my life. I hated Christianity just because there was a Catholic in my neighborhood who had 2 wives. This is illegal in India still he was having unofficially 2nd wife. He was also a church goer every Sunday as a family. I lost all my respect for Christianity after seeing him. I believed Christians were people with no morality.

Now what would happen if the elder of a Church was one living with multiple wives? Will that not damage the reputation of the Church?

An elder is not same as Pastor, Pastors are paid workers by Church, which was never an accepted practice. In my Church, we do not have pastors, but elders who are appointed (not elected) based on their quality of Christian life (not based on educational qualification).

Regarding those who are divorced, I would not consider them for eldership, since it is very difficult to analyse or judge the motive of Divorce. It might be a divorce that is not their mistake at all. Still very difficult to find the truth. Hence let them serve the Lord in the Church without being an elder.

Eldership is like being a Chief servant. While all others are servants of one another in a Church. Only thing important is, am I serving the Lord. In a true body of Christ, every part will have a job to play, not just a Pastor. Since most of the institutional churches are one man show, anyone who cannot become elder due to their past will get offended. But if the Church is a true representation of Body then eldership does not matter to a true part of the body.

**Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2017/4/19 8:12**

Just for clarification, the divorces that I was speaking of took place before the people I mentioned were born again. Their conversion, maturing, and calling all came after the fact.

I do find it curious that the church seems to focus quite a bit on this one qualification of an elder, but I seldom hear much said about the remainder of the qualifications. For example, does the man rule his own household well? Does his wife exhibit the signs of a woman who is loved and cherished by her husband. Do the children obey and respect their father? Do they live in subjection to him because he is parenting according to Godliness? Is he a glutton, or does he have his own body in subjection? Does he demonstrate a life of prayer and commitment to the word of God? Is he apt to teach the word?

I agree with Sreeram. We have an odd structure in our churches many times that does not resemble the biblical structure. We have a paid pastor and often board members or "elders" who do little more than pay the bills and decide whether or not to pave the parking lot. Elders are God's way of overseeing the church. These men are to be the living examples of Godliness to the body. They are to be walking in the power of the Holy Spirit and living lives of Biblical holiness and education. They sacrifice their own lives and desires to see the body whom they oversee grow into maturity. So the qualifications of eldership are extremely important.

**Re: - posted by lovejt (), on: 2017/4/19 13:00**

Appreciate your thoughts Travis/Sree. Am very much for fellowship and complete forgiveness to those who have divorced. If the American Church is 50% divorced, we need a lot of mercy. Leadership is a different standard.

I agree about the salaried pastor comments.

Do you guys ever see John 10:11-13 as a verse that could apply in this area in some ways? Not saying everyone who gets a salary doesn't care for the sheep but the principle of it.....

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

**Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2017/4/19 13:27**

James: I am not saying that elders should not be supported by the work of the gospel. Paul teaches at length about the support that the church should have for the elders. In fact, he says that elders who rule well are worthy of double honor and the context is unmistakably financial support for the work they do. Just like the original apostles that realized they needed to no longer wait tables, but devote themselves to the word and to prayer, elders who oversee churches are often called to the same.

If a church is small, then several elders can oversee the flock and do so in spite of having full or part time jobs. When

a church body grows very large at all, there will have to be some men who are committed to full time ministry to the body. In that case, then he who preaches the gospel should live of the gospel in my opinion. It is a very Biblical pattern.

But, if we would follow the Biblical pattern of recognizing and ordaining leadership in our churches, we would not have men who draw a salary but do not truly care for the flock.

**Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2017/4/19 15:50**

Bible only talks about Elders getting help from congregation that they serve. Some kind of gift. But not salary. Salary is a monthly contract. So what happens these days is a person who is pastoring a church waits till his credibility improves to be hired as a pastor for a bigger Church, hence there by makes more money. Service should come out of a burden that God has put in our hearts, not out of salary that a Church is offering to pay.

In our Church all the elders have a day job. Still they do a good job taking care of Church and their family. This model works even for a bigger Church. One of our Churches that I was part of in India has close to 500 people attending. It is doable if we look on to God for provision rather than people!

**Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2017/4/20 8:07**

I think you are right Sree. So often we look at the church as a corporate structure and we see men who attempt to climb the corporate ladder so to speak. It is not God's plan or God's way.

We have a fellowship of about 120 people that is growing fairly rapidly. We have three elders including the pastor. All three of us have full time jobs and families. We have a large percentage of new converts who are in need of teaching and training and are doing our best to see that this discipleship happens. But we are finding that we do not have the time to properly minister to the people, our own families, and work full time as well. At some point in the future we see the need to oversee the church on a full time basis. We would love to appoint another elder now and more in the future, but we have no one in the fellowship who God has called out and who meets the qualifications of an elder.

I guess I say this to say that a salary is not necessarily a bad thing. It is the heart of men that leads to the problems in the church, not the fact that we might look to a salary structure to allow us to minister to the body full time. I think if we would allow God to call out and appoint elders Biblically, then we won't have to worry about the salary issue.

I might also add that I think the church in which a person could seek to be "hired" into a position of higher pay is a church that does not understand Biblical leadership. No man applies for and is hired for the position of apostle, pastor, evangelist, prophet, or teacher, and no man can apply for and be hired for the position of an elder. God calls. God chooses. God anoints. God ordains. We simply hear from Him and lay hands on the man to set him in the place that God has called him to.

**Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2017/4/20 20:54**

There is not a position in Christ that God cannot call a man and equip him for after he has been saved and forgiven to the point that one is now walking in the light of Christ in fellowship with God.

We must never place any man's sins that have been forgiven above the blood of Jesus in where he has made atonement for them on the Cross.

We must not hold people in bondage for their past sins. We must take the position of Christ by not remembering them anymore. Jesus can use anyone who has truly repented of their sins and forsaken them.

A person cannot undo his/her past and we do a great disservice to God and his people when we use a person's past against them when God has forgiven them.

Blessings,  
rbanks

**Re: advice from an elder - posted by savannah, on: 2017/4/20 21:28**

"We have a large percentage of new converts who are in need of teaching and training and are doing our best to see that this discipleship happens. But we are finding that we do not have the time to properly minister to the people, our own families, and work full time as well."

Don't worry, the Holy Spirit has the time to properly minister to the people.

Never worry about anything. Instead, in every situation let your petitions be made known to God through prayers and requests, with thanksgiving. Then God's peace, which goes far beyond anything we can imagine, will guard your hearts and minds in union with the Messiah Jesus. Phillippians 4:6,7

Exodus 18:13-24

On the next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning until evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why are you sitting by yourself, and all the people stand around you from morning until evening?"

Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me and I decide between a man and his neighbor, and I make known the decrees of God and his laws."

Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good! You will surely wear out, both you and these people who are with you, for this is too heavy a burden for you; you are not able to do it by yourself. Now listen to me, I will give you advice, and may God be with you: You be a representative for the people to God, and you bring their disputes to God; warn them of the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. But you choose from the people capable men, God-fearing, men of truth, those who hate bribes, and put them over the people as rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. They will judge the people under normal circumstances, and every difficult case they will bring to you, but every small case they themselves will judge, so that you may make it easier for yourself, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will be able to go home satisfied."

Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he had said.

**Re: Elder qualifications, on: 2017/4/23 8:32**

"For I hate divorce," says the Lord

~ Malachi 2:16

**Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2017/4/23 16:37**

As far as salary for full time worker is concerned I think both things apply. He should not work for money but receive fair wages to enable him to do his work. Payment should be fair on both sides.

1 Timothy 5:18 For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

If a company boss is entitled to profit takings from his company, and pays wages should not a shepherd who cares for soul of his flock get a fair compensation?

I am leading a small house fellowship and do not get anything for it. Sometimes I get support with DIY jobs. I do not expect anything, but I can only do so much, as I work full time self-employed. When we grow we have to rethink.

We have another couple in our fellowship, that is sent out and supported by their home church and they can give more ti

me. Fine with me.

Paul had the advantage that he had a mobile profession. Not every Christian worker is in this position. He used that in Corinth where he felt he needed to set an example to stuff the mouths of the superapostles. In other places he received support with gratitude. Receiving with thanksgivings blesses the giver, too.

**Re: - posted by joed2 (), on: 2017/6/8 23:21**

Travis, at least you work. I cannot tell you how many times I have encountered preachers who have not worked in years who have their heads stuck in the sand. They are unapproachable and if I should ever tell them of my workdays and my work life and my work problems, the response is a glazed look on their faces. The fact that you work speaks volumes in my opinion. I'd rather go to a church where the pastors work at day jobs and have little time to communicate personally than to go to the churches I go to and hear naive preaching.

**Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2017/6/9 2:15**

Quote:

-----by ernestiu  
"For I hate divorce," says the Lord

~ Malachi 2:16  
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Let's mention everything the Lord hates, not just divorce:

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: a proud look (haughty eyes), a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. ~ Proverbs 6:16

Let's not forget what the Son of God himself said, "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shalt not commit adultery: But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." ~ Matt 5:27-28

And yet how many stand in the pulpit guilty of the sin of adultery every single week, brother? No one bats an eye at inward log in a man's eye; no, they just continually choose to point out the outward speck of divorce.

**Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2017/6/9 4:03**

Quote:

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I am leading a small house fellowship and do not get anything for it. Sometimes I get support with DIY jobs. I do not expect anything, but I can only do so much, as I work full time self-employed. When we grow we have to rethink.  
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I am not totally against elders getting paid though it is not practiced in the churches I am part of. But I agree with you that an elder with regular day job is limited with respect to his potential to serve in Church. To solve this problem we have popularity of Elders. We always have minimum of 2 elders, when it gets beyond their limit then few more can be added.

Zac Poonen says that if Jesus himself could disciple only 12 people, then we should be arrogant that we can lead more than him! So approximately the count is 1 person to watch over 12 adults.

Since love of money is the root of all evil, it is always safe to serve the Lord without expecting money. God can definitely pay us back in so many other ways. God is never a debtor, I have personally experienced this in my life. If we give our time and money to God in some way, he gives it back in many other ways multiplied many multiple ways!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miOhvpdo3uU>

The youtube link is a short testimony by an Elder brother in one of our churches in Indian villages. He speaks on the burden to build the body of Christ and financial struggles he had.

**Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2017/6/9 19:35**

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.

In the NT there is a pattern of elders, or overseers, receiving from the church so that they will be free to lead the people and spend time in the word and in teaching the congregation. Remember that the first apostles also crossed this bridge and realized the necessity of this. I am not at all saying that elders should be payed, nor am I saying that they should not be payed. I am simply saying that there is a clear Biblical pattern of the eldership being supported by the body.

**Re: Elder qualifications, on: 2017/6/11 13:03**

I listened to Zac Poonen and he told that the requirements for someone to be an elder is he is not divorced and he raise his children good and they are following the Lord. Zac point is if someone cannot be a good example in marriage and in family, how he can lead others to Christ?

And Zac also said that if one of his children ended up not following the Lord, he will resign as the head elder of his Church because in a personal life matter if he had failed already, so what more to lead other people outside your personal life circle?