

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Titus 1:6

Titus 1:6 - posted by todd, on: 2003/7/27 1:22

Titus 1:5-6

"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion."

My question deals with the "having children who believe" part. So Paul is saying that in order to be an elder your children must be believers? For some reason that just strikes me as strange. I never noticed it before? Do all modern churches adhere to this requirement? Or do some consider it a contextual issue meant for that church in Crete at that time? Why did Paul leave this requirement out in 1 Timothy 3?

1 Timothy 3:2-5

"An overseer, then,

- must be above reproach
- the husband of one wife
- temperate
- prudent
- respectable
- hospitable
- able to teach
- not addicted to wine or pugnacious

but

- gentle
- uncontentious
- free from the love of money.

He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)."

Keeping children under control with all dignity is very different from them having to be believers. It seems that one of these is under a man's control (managing the household well) while the other is not (having children that believe).

I have this triple commentary of Welsley, Henry and Spurgeon and none of them comment on this specific part of Titus 1:6. I find that very interesting.

The only direct comments I could find at all were in my Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary (Volume 6). It simply says:

"having faithful (believing) children.' He who could not bring his children to faith, how shall he bring others?"
- pp. 517

The word for "believing" in the Greek is "pistos" (Strong's #4103). It seems after doing a quick word study that this word doesn't have to mean "believing in God" but can simply mean "faithful," "true," "just," or "trust worthy."

However, I use Zodiates Keyword Study Bible which includes this comment on the word "pistos":

"one believing in the Gospel of Christ, a believer, a Christian (Acts 10:45; 16:1; II Cor. 6:15; I Tim. 6:2; TITUS 1:6, etc.)."
-my bold, pp. 1867

So I don't know how authoritative that is. His (Zodhaites) stuff seems to be pretty widely accepted.

And even if Paul isn't necessarily referring to Christians when he says "believers", I still find it strange that a man would be judged in any way based on the character or beliefs of his children. Would this prove to be a big flaw in numerous biblical characters?

Re: Titus 1:6 - posted by todd, on: 2003/7/27 4:09

Ok this is twice I have made my own back to back posts... today! Bear with me. I just found some good stuff online and might have answered my own question before anyone even got the chance to jump in. but even if i have, i would really appreciate any feedback.

I got these from www.searchgodsword.org.

"Having children that believe ...

Despite the fact that this is uslly interpreted to mean "children that are baptized believers," that is not what the passage s ays. Of course, it could mean that, because Paul frequently used "believing" as a synecdoche embracing all of the prima ry steps of obedience to the gospel; but there is no certainty that he did so here. The opinion of Zerr is worthy of conside ration:

My conclusion is that "faithful children" in Titus 1:6 is equivalent to controlled children in 1 Tim. 3:4,12, where the same p oint is under consideration, and hence that they are to believe in and be faithful to their father, regardless of whether the y are members of the church or not, or even that they are old enough to be members."

- Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament

Anybody know who "Zerr" is?

"having faithful children;

legitimate ones, born in lawful wedlock, in the same sense as such are called godly and holy, in (Malachi 2:15) (1 Corint hians 7:14) for by faithful children cannot be meant converted ones, or true believers in Christ; for it is not in the power of men to make their children such; and their not being so can never be an objection to their being elders, if otherwise quali fied; at most the phrase can only intend, that they should be brought up in the faith, in the principles, doctrines, and way s of Christianity, or in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

- The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible

"having faithful children, obedient and good, brought up in the true Christian faith, and living according to it, at least as fa r as the endeavours of the parents can avail. It is for the honour of ministers that their children be faithful and pious, and such as become their religion."

- This one apparently came from Matthew Henry's COmmentary! One that is supposed to be in my triple parallel comme ntary. I never noticed the claim that the Matthew Henry section was abbreviated until right now. Kind of a bummer, but it' s still a good source for me. Does anyone else get the feeling that actually having the physical commentaries is becomin g less and less necessary (provided one has easy access to the internet)? I would be interested to hear thoughts on the advantages/disadvantages here.

Genesis 18:19

""For I have chosen him (Abraham), so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

I Samuel 12-14

"In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on them selves and he did not rebuke them. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall no t be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

I have realized that writing these posts out in this forum helps me collect my own thoughts. This isn't the first time i've ha d a dialogue with myself on here. Well, at least I am being edified. I hope others of you are too. And I do hope to hear s ome of your thoughts and input.

Re: Titus 1:6 - posted by Herdman, on: 2003/7/28 9:17

This is one of the problems caused by the modern Bibles. The word "believing" was substituted for the word "faithful" and confusion resulted, as you can see by the wide array of comments concerning the substituted word.

Actually, the correct interpretation is found right in the text, for the Bible is the best commentary on itself.

The faithful children are "faithful" because they are "not accused of riot" first of all. Riot is an "uncontrolled way of life," in this case resulting from a man who doesn't have "his children in subjection with all gravity," (1 Tim. 3:4). They are secondly faithful because they are not "unruly," since their father "ruleth well his own house," (1 Tim. 3:4).

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/7/28 10:24

I would be interested in the thoughts of forum users on this question. Was this an initial condition of a prospective elder or an abiding qualification? In other words what would happen to the elder if his children became 'unfaithful'? and then what would happen if they became 'faithful' again? Would he be suspended and then re-appointed?

His/Yours
Ron

Re: - posted by Eleazarj1, on: 2003/8/1 1:31

Ron, you hit the nail right on the head with your question. Just like Herdman said, modern man has tried to exchange the literal, straight-forward Word of God for a lie by trying to change the meanings of the words to fit their own desires. Your question was a wise one Ron, in regards to the "faithful" explanation of modern men, (that the word means that they could be "upright" and "faithful" but not necessarily saved Christians- what if the children become unruly? Would God give us such a command that we should be responsible for something we can't control? Absolutely not! The only constant that can be relied on in this situation is true faith in Christ. The reason that Paul can count on the fact the "faithful" sons will remain faithful sons is if they are in fact new creations in Christ. Paul orders, by order of God of course, that the elders have sons who are in fact true Christians. Just as stated above, if a man can not lead his own family in the way of truth, how can he lead a body of believers? Sadly, this principal is not followed by the modern church, just as many other Biblical commands are not followed. Modern man has done a good job of using experience and "intellect" to make new rules for the church that do not agree with Biblical standards. (As if God was wrong, Ha!) Thankfully, God will make foolish those who call themselves wise and attempt to exchange his Word for man-made lies. So, in short, yes, Paul does in fact mean that the elders should adhere to all of those qualifications if they are to build a true and solid church, including the rule that their sons be Christians themselves as well. A good rule of thumb with Scripture: if it seems straight-forward and easily spelled out as a definite yes or no, it probably is. God didn't give us His Word knowing that we would need Greek Word-Root Dictionaries to see what He "really means."

Seeking only His approval,
Sean

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/1 2:17

Quote:

" Would God give us such a command that we should be responsible for something we can't control? Absolutely not! The only constant that can be relied on in this situation is true faith in Christ. The reason that Paul can count on the fact the "faithful" sons will remain faithful sons is if they are in fact new creations in Christ. Paul orders, by order of God of course , that the elders have sons who are in fact true Christians. Just as stated above, if a man can not lead his own family in the way of truth, how can he lead a body of believers?"

I am confused by the above quotation. Perhaps I missed something. In the beginning you seem to be saying that God would not hold anyone accountable for something that they can't control. And it seems that you are implying this to mean their children. So that would cause me to think you are saying that Titus 1:6 is not referring to children having to be Christians. BUt then you state that this is the correct interpretation. Could you please clarify for me?

Perhaps you are saying that God doesn't hold us responsible for our children's faith, but this is a requirement for an elder. So, while Christians in general aren't necessarily responsible for their children's faith (ultimately out of our hands) this is merely a requirement for being an elder. This is reasonable because it is a safety measure that Paul was using. It's a very human type of safety measure. How close am I to understanding your position on this?

But then you make this comment,

"Just as stated above, if a man can not lead his own family in the way of truth, how can he lead a body of believers?" which I believe was your own twist on this statement from the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary that I referenced:

"He who could not bring his children to faith, how shall he bring others?" which seems very different to me. Were you in fact referring to this reference?

Your twist is more ecclesiastical while the other is more evangelical. One is concentrated on internal issues (within the Church) and the other is focused on external ones, at least it seems this way to me. And the more evangelical one would seem to imply that elders are to be effective evangelically.

So this brings up a new point, is it necessary for elders to be effective at evangelism? Or evangelical at all? I guess that is a whole nother thread (or book, or life study). But comments are welcome here.

Quote:

"A good rule of thumb with Scripture: if it seems straight-forward and easily spelled out as a definite yes or no, it probably is. God didn't give us His Word knowing that we would need Greek Word-Root Dictionaries to see what He "really means."

This kind of thinking intrigues me. I honestly don't have very concrete thoughts about this. But I do think an overemphasis of this kind of attitude can be dangerous. My hunch is that you believe the King James version is the "true" version. Is this correct?

Otherwise, who is to determine which version to read? Here is a verse that came up today that would be an exception to your statement above (at least I very much think so):

Luke 14:26

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

You may comment that the principle "Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture" will bring enough light to this verse without the need for commentaries. Perhaps you are correct. I would appreciate evidence for this if it is your opinion and then perhaps we can start another thread on this verse. But I am assuming much here.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/1 2:35

Herman wrote:

"Actually, the correct interpretation is found right in the text, for the Bible is the best commentary on itself.

The faithful children are "faithful" because they are "not accused of riot" first of all. Riot is an "uncontrolled way of life," in this case resulting from a man who doesn't have "his children in subjection with all gravity," (1 Tim. 3:4). They are secondly faithful because they are not "unruly," since their father "ruleth well his own house," (1 Tim. 3:4)."

I am leaning towards this understanding of the passage. However, how do you know the following requirements are connected to the "faithful children?" It seems to me that this is unclear and therefore cannot be absolutely conclusive (as your statement "the correct interpretation" implies).

In case you are unclear in what I am saying, I will attempt to explain further.

Titus 1:5-6

"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children that believe (or "faithful children"), not accused of dissipation or rebellion." (NASB)

As you can see, the NASB (as opposed to the King James) interpreters felt that a comma was implied in between "believe" and "not accused." This leaves open the interpretation that "not accused of dissipation or rebellion" is referring to yet another requirement for the elder and not connected to the faithful children.

But then again, the first requirement ("if any man be above reproach") would seem to clearly include dissipation and rebellion (i.e. in order to be included in the broad category of "above reproach" the elder would have, indeed, necessarily not been accused of dissipation or rebellion, right?) and therefore make it unlikely (yet not impossible) that Paul would add this in reference to the elder. AND even more unlikely that, if this were the case, he wouldn't put it directly after the first requirement. For can a man be accused of dissipation and rebellion and the same man also be above reproach?

Re: - posted by Eleazarj1, on: 2003/8/2 3:42

Todd, let me try and clarify.

An elder, I believe, can not directly and definitely control their child's ultimate decision to follow Christ. However, if the child is brought up under the truth of the Words of God, God flat out promises that they will not leave the faith:

Pro 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, And even when he is old he will not depart from it."

That is an absolute statement. If the elders truly bring their children up in the way they should go, they will receive the truth and not depart from it. Ever. If God has saved them, God will keep them. Jesus said, "No one will pluck you from my Father's hand." My point was this: the elder most certainly has a big hand in whether their child comes to Christ or not and the only thing that could not change in this situation is the child's spiritual state of being. If the child were not a Christian, the elder would have very little control over whether the child will be "unruly" or "faithful". This proves that Paul is saying without question, that if a man can not bring up his own children in the faith, then he is not worthy of the responsibility of being the "father" of a group of believers. Thus dispelling the non-Biblical argument that if a man raises his child as a heathen, but makes sure that the heathen is a "good person" or is "faithful" and not "unruly", then he is worthy of such a great undertaking a leading a church. I hope this is clear, if not, just ask and I will try and find a different way to explain it.

In regards to the statement about bringing up a church; if one can not bring up a child correctly, the meaning of the statement being ecclesiastical or evangelical makes no difference. I have never met a solid, strong Christian who is not evangelical. Evangelism is a direct fruit of conversion. Of course an elder should be effective evangelically, what are we here for? God left us on Earth after our conversion so that we could evangelize. It was the last command that he gave us and is an absolute for all Christians. A non-evangelical elder is but a child in Christ and is obviously not on solid food. (Hebrews 5:12-14) A worthy elder of the church will have brought up his children in the faith and will also possess all of the other requirements for becoming an elder.

Forgive me for confusing things. I was talking about the previous statement and I don't see why it matters, seeing as a normal, Biblical Christian, especially one worthy of becoming an elder should most certainly be evangelical.

No, I do not believe that the KJV is the only correct version. I do acknowledge that there are some differences from translation to translation, and that using a Greek dictionary and Bible can be very helpful in deeply studying the Word. However I know that God would not trick us by saying something and giving it some hidden meaning that can only be discovered through using some man-made book. The Bible is full Truth and is completely compatible with itself. Therefore any confusion caused by wordings in certain verses can be backed up by a knowledge of the personality and character of God and his Word. The verse in Luke, taken out of context completely, does seem to command us to hate everyone. But, when placed in the context of the full Word of God, the meaning is obvious. The Bible says elsewhere that we should not hate anyone, and that it is in fact a transgression of the 6th commandment. Therefore we see that Christ obviously meant that, in comparison, our love for mother, brother, and self should seem like hatred compared to our love for Him. To say that we absolutely need some outside source to understand the Word of God, is to say that the Word is not complete in and of itself, which is obviously false. Jesus rebuked the Jews in John 8:43-44, telling them that they did not understand His Words about righteousness because they were in fact children of the devil. This proves that there is a link between our salvation and understanding the Word of God. Through this verse and many others, it can be reasonably understood that those who are in fact true converts will understand God's Word.

Please be sure that in reading these threads that you have left your pride at the door and are discussing humbly and teachably. This is not an accusation, only a loving reminder from brother to brother.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/2 14:43

Quote:

"Evangelism is a direct fruit of conversion."

Yes, this seems right to me but I am hoping you could give me some Scripture references.

Quote:

"Of course an elder should be effective evangelically, what are we here for? God left us on Earth after our conversion so that we could evangelize."

I have often heard this kind of talk. My youth pastor will often say things like "if He didn't want to use you anymore He would kill you and take you to heaven." This is in a half joking manner but He believes this train of thought. That our main purpose "down here" is to serve God. But I find that this is not the case.

Matthew 22:37-40

"And He said to him, YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

What our "job" here? To love God with all we are and have and to love others like we love ourselves. It's all about love. And I agree that, most likely, at some point every believer, especially in the beginning, will have an instinct to want and "share the good news" about Jesus and what He's done for them, but I don't see it as a requirement. Just love God and others. That might mean evangelism for you, but not for someone else, at any given time.

On earth we can choose to worship God of our own free will in faith even though we can't necessarily see Him. This, as I see it, has tremendous value in and of itself. If for no other reason, this would be sufficient for God to leave us here.

Quote:

"It was the last command that he gave us and is an absolute for all Christians."

After having looked into this some in the past, I have realized that it might not be the case, but instead it is an opinion. Jesus spoke those things to the 11 disciples. He said of them "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:47). We are not. He also said of them, "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents and drink deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Now was Jesus speaking to that specific time and generation, or for all time? And either way, He didn't say that those who believe will evangelize.

One might argue that if we are disciples of Jesus then we have the same "job" to do as the original 11. But that is only an opinion as best I can understand.

Quote:

"Through this verse and many others, it can be reasonably understood that those who are in fact true converts will understand God's Word."

This is a troubling statement. What do you mean by "understand God's Word"? Because I don't know two Christians who completely agree about every single thing in the Bible. Where do you draw the line?

Quote:

"Please be sure that in reading these threads that you have left your pride at the door and are discussing humbly and teachably. This is not an accusation, only a loving reminder from brother to brother."

Yes, thanks for the reminder. It is very important to always keep that in mind. If I do not seem to be doing this, let me know.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2003/8/2 19:34

Here is a question that also I think must be asked: Can somebody qualify for being an elder if they are not married? Can those whom God has called to remain e.g. the apostle Paul, be elders? One might argue that the apostle Paul was single... but remember, the apostle Paul was never an elder in the Church. His offices included apostle, evangelists, and teacher... but not elder.

Re: - posted by laholmes, on: 2003/8/3 10:17

I will not answer that question because all I have right now is my opinion. But, I will pose another. Do you have to have children to be an elder? If you must be married, must you have children?

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/3 14:42

Finney says this:

"XVI. EVILS OF CLERICAL CELIBACY.

1. It is a war with nature.
2. It is a bad example, and encourages it in laymen.
3. It tends to licentiousness. This is a notorious fact.
4. Celibates cannot rebuke celibacy in laymen.
5. It is unjust to women.
6. Reproaches God, and implies a denial of his wisdom.
7. It is a constant temptation to unchastity.
8. It makes chaste women afraid of them.
9. It makes them a temptation to many women.
10. Makes them the terror of husbands.
11. Creates much jealousy in families.
12. Many do have and will have mistresses notorious (??).
13. Make the clergy generally odious.
14. Also, objects of suspicion.
15. Expose them to endless female intrigues.
16. Makes them selfish and unsocial.
17. Begets a contempt for women.
18. Corrupts society. This is a fact, see Catholic Europe.
19. It embarrasses them in their work in many ways.
20. Renders them incompetent to be a spiritual guide to females.
21. It embarrasses their spiritual development.
22. It is an error of the same class as nunneries and monasteries. It grew out of the idea that sin has its root in matter, and that the body is essentially impure, that its appetites must be annihilated.
23. Trial has demonstrated that the celibacy of the clergy is only evil continually.
24. Never justifiable except for the most cogent reasons.
25. As the reasons can't be generally made public, it falls under the rule, 'do nothing that needs explanation when such explanation is impracticable.'

-"Lecture Notes On Pastoral Theology", pp. 45-46, Published by Richard M. Friedrich, 2002

"XIII. MARRIAGE OF MINISTERS.

1. Marriage a divine institution.
2. The rule, and celibacy the exception with all.
3. Also, the duty and the privilege of the human race.
4. Ministers are no exception. See objections to minister's celibacy.
5. They eminently need wives.
6. They need a wife to protect them against temptation.
7. Also, against being a snare to women.
8. To secure them against suspicion and jealousy.

9. They need the sympathy and the prayers of a wife.
 10. They need the knowledge of woman which they get by having a wife.
 11. Also, the counsel of a wife.
 12. Also, the help of a wife, to understand the wants, trials, and infirmities of women, and their sins.
 13. Also, to view things through a wife's eyes, and from a woman's standpoint.
 14. To be an example as a husband.
 15. Also, as the head of a family.
 16. To give one the experience of a husband.
 17. It makes him seem more like one of the people.
 18. It allies him more closely to society.
 19. Creates a bond of family sympathy between him and other families.
 20. It gives him a higher conception of God's wisdom and care for human happiness.
 21. Makes him better acquainted with human nature, human wants, excellencies, defects.
 22. A single man is not a whole man.
 23. Not generally a happy or a safe man, as pastor.
 24. Apt to be selfish, prejudiced against women.
 25. Also incompetent as a teacher of women.
 26. As the church is composed mostly of females, celibacy, if prolonged, is a serious drawback.
 27. Ministers should honor marriage by example.
 28. They should, in every way, discourage celibacy.
 29. To decline marriage, is to indirectly encourage licentiousness.
 30. Also, to wrong woman, dishonor God.
 31. Celibacy justifiable only for peculiar reasons.
 32. Priestly or ministerial office no justification of celibacy."
- pp. 38-39

Also:

"XV. PAPISTICAL REASONS FOR PRIESTLY CELIBACY.

1. Marriage embarrassing to the spiritual life. Answer:
 - (1) It is a help, as it prevents temptation.
 - (2) It cultivates many forms of virtue.
 - (3) It is in accordance with our nature.
 - (4) It is a necessity of the race, and its continuance.
2. Inconsistent with the example of Christ and Paul.
Their example justified by peculiar reasons.
3. Paul wished that all men were unmarried. Answer:
 - (1) This, if it proves anything, proves too much.
 - (2) The wish was the result of the peculiar circumstances of the church at the time.
4. Paul's teaching and example imply a disapproval of marriage. Answer:
 - (1) Not more so of priests, than of all.
 - (2) Paul guarded against this inference by expressly declaring marriage honorable in all, ministers and people.
5. Revelation represents those "who have not defiled themselves with women" as being more highly honored in heaven.
Answer:
 - (1) Whatever this means, it is not peculiar to ministers.
 - (2) The intercourse of the married is not defiling.
 - (3) The passage has reference to fornication and adultery.
 - (4) Paul considered marriage, with its duties and privileges as not defiling the bed.
 - (5) Paul denounced "forbidding to marry."
6. It is better for the spirit to deny and crush the flesh.
 - (1) Then our animal nature is a mistake.
 - (2) Then we are justified in not propagating the race.
 - (3) Restraint within divinely appointed limits, and not the utter denial and annihilation of our constitutional appetites, is our law.
 - (4) Enoch walked with God 400 years and begat sons and daughters.
7. A family is a hindrance to a minister in his work. Ans.:
 - (1) This is exceptional. The reverse is the rule.
 - (2) If this were a necessary result, it should have prohibited the marriage of apostles and ministers.

- (3) Paul asserts that he and Barnabas were at liberty to marry.
 - (4) A well-ordered family a constant help to a minister in many ways.
 - (5) The help more than counterbalances the hindrance.
8. A single man is less expensive to the church. Answer:
- (1) No minister at all would cost less still, in dollars.
 - (2) But to do without a minister would be too expensive.
 - (3) Churches can't afford to be without a whole pastor.
 - (4) A pastor's wife more than pays for her support.
 - (5) It is a shame for the church to take this view.
 - (6) This is seriously urged by the ritualists of England today.
 - (7) Especially as it respects curates and the lower clergy.
 - (8) They plead for an expensive clergy for the upper classes.
 - (9) And hence, for celibacy of the lower clergy, because they will be less expensive to the people.
 - (10) A minister can often keep house as cheaply as he can board - his garden, fruit, washing, and mending.
 - (11) Most congregations can pay him easier in the products of their industry.
 - (12) It is generally dangerous for a minister to board. It creates jealousy of the family in which he boards.
 - (13) Also, the woman where he boards.
 - (14) He needs the sacred enclosure and confidence of his own family."
- pp. 42-44

I think this all applies to elders as well but maybe I am wrong.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/3 15:08

Other Commentaries on Titus 1:6 concerning "the husband of one wife." All come from www.searchgodsword.org

"Husband of one wife ...

There can be no doubt that heads of families were alone considered suitable material from among whom the appointment of elders was to be made, as indicated by the entire context. The historical church sinned in the development of a government by celibate priests. This qualification does not allow an elder to be polygamous, nor to be divorced and remarried except upon Scriptural grounds."

- Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament

"There is his relative character. In his own person, he must be of conjugal chastity: The husband of one wife. The church of Rome says the husband of no wife, but from the beginning it was not so; marriage is an ordinance from which no profession nor calling is a bar. 1 Co. 9:5, Have I not power, says Paul, to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles? Forbidding to marry is one of the erroneous doctrines of the antichristian church, 1 Tim. 4:3. Not that ministers must be married; this is not meant; but the husband of one wife may be either not having divorced his wife and married another (as was too common among those of the circumcision, even for slight causes), or the husband of one wife, that is, at one and the same time, no bigamist; not that he might not be married to more than one wife successively, but, being married, he must have but one wife at once, not two or more, according to the too common sinful practice of those times, by a perverse imitation of the patriarchs, from which evil custom our Lord taught a reformation."

- Matthew Henry Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible

It's interesting that there are much fewer expositions on this part of the verse. And I could find nothing about "having children" as was mentioned but only comments as applied to the entire phrase "having children who believed." That is a very intriguing question.

It seems pretty clear to me that Paul directed that all elders must be married to one wife. He could have said "only one wife" but he did not do so either here or in 1 Timothy 3:2. I feel the same goes for having children. Paul could have said "And if having children, they must believe (or "be faithful")" but he simply said "having children who."

This is merely my opinion as it's not made totally clear. I simply consider Paul's guidelines here as wise council. If I were ever in a place where I was to make such a decision, it would have to be for some peculiar reason that, one who does not fit these categories as I understand them, would be accepted as an elder.

It seems that on many of these kinds of things they are not made completely clear. Therefore, we have need of the Spirit's guidance in each situation.

Re: - posted by laholmes, on: 2003/8/3 17:13

Is there an age requirement for an elder? Is he an elder just because he is old and met all the other requirements, or because he knew his word, regardless of his age. There is a natural progression of the older the person, the more chances they have had to study.

On the same topic, I feel that as a minister, God would have allowed for me to remain single. It was not wrong for me to remain celibate, nor was it wrong for me to get married. For myself, on my way to marriage, it will make me lean on God more than being single would. However, God had to bring that person into my life that was called the same way I was. Had I married someone who was not, that would have been wrong. Everytime I make a decision now, I think of her. Not in a bad way, but I do have someone else to think of. Being single would have made me do it out of sheer willpower, rather than God's grace. Getting married will make me depend on God more.

However, if you want to be single, more power to you. (If God has called you to that)