

"CAN A DIVORCED MAN SERVE IN THE KINGDOM?"

By Dr. Hoyt W. Allen, Jr.

Concerning the question about **divorced men serving as an elder or deacon** in light of the qualification of the "Husband Of One Wife" (1 Timothy 3:2,12), I would like to expound. This has been chewed over ever since the beginning of the church. I have studied the subject with people from several schools of thought, and have prayed endlessly about the subject. **My conclusion is:**

1) **Divorce is not the unforgivable sin.** Many church folk want to condemn a person for eternity for this sin. Some churches will not permit a divorced person to teach, sing, play an instrument, usher, be married in the church building, or even permit their minister to perform weddings for a divorced person in their own living room, etc.; (even if the divorce was for a Scriptural reason - See Matthew 19:9). Some seemingly believe they are being a hero by taking this bold stand. However, the same judgmental individuals will permit the marriage of a believer & an unbeliever, or will okay a church wedding of a six month pregnant girl. This is the height of inconsistency.

2) **God is more interested in where a man is today spiritually, than where he has come from.** The apostle Paul was responsible for the persecution of many Christians & yet after he was "saved" he became a great warrior for Christ --- God did not say to him, "Due to your past, you can not serve the church as an apostle or an evangelist". I contend that many good solid potential deacons, elders, and "Pulpit Ministers" have been sidestepped and 'the church has been cheated out of servants in these capacities, due to the misinterpretation of the stated qualification. May we ask ourselves the question, "Does not our Lord say that one can be "Born Again" (John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9), and start afresh, with the slate of sin wiped clean?"

3) **A divorced man needs time to get back to "normal" before he is suitable for the deaconship or eldership.** Divorce is upsetting emotionally, physically, and spiritually to say the least.

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It usually takes several years to recuperate from divorce. It would call for him to be remarried & that his wife be a Christian, as well as his children (if of age). The other qualifications need to be met as well as this one. He must demonstrate his love for Christ & His Church by his daily walk.

4) **The stated Scripture is saying that a man is to be a "One Woman Man".** He is not to be single, but to have the experience of raising a family (I served as an elder at age 28, which was too young). This grants to him the supervisory experience needed in over-seeing a congregation. He is to have one wife at a time. His wife may die - does that mean he is to run to the church office & immediately resign? If his wife & he divorce, that is a "mark" which will take a long time to heal, thus his resignation is in order. When the stated qualification was written, polygamy was common (Yet God's plan was one man for one woman - Genesis 1:27; 2:20-24). God was attempting to say that he wanted his church workers to be normal & not as the polygamists or as the "Gays" of Sodom or of our society.

5) **I am not one for being too quick to put a man into the office of elder or deacon.** Many men have problems accepting a servant's heart & if given a position of authority before they are ready for it, it can cause great trouble for a congregation. When a man accepts the nomination for a deacon or elder, I am convinced that he should understand that he is accountable and has some responsibility to the congregation to fulfill this office in a serious manner or he should resign. Therefore, I promote a periodic confidence vote be taken to keep one on target.

Plainly, don't get short changed by dealing with the past. Do the work of God and be ready to meet Him. The Bible teaches that to avoid hell and gain heaven - one must:

- 1) Believe In Jesus As Savior (Acts 16:31) 2) Repent Of Sins (Acts 17:30) 3) Confess Christ Audibly (Acts 8:37) 4) Be Baptized In Water (Acts 2:38) 5) Live A Christian Life (Acts 14:22)