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God Sets the Qualifications for His Men

by Dr. Terry Basham, Sr

Pastor of New Life Baptist Church, Plain City Ohio

God's people in this world and these people are gathered into groups called Churches, the Bible calls them the churches of Christ. We know them today as Baptist Churches. They recognize no earthly head and are ruled by the Word of God alone. In these congregations of baptized believers, Christ the Bishop of our souls appoints Pastors. Men who he calls and the church recognizes as his Servants are installed or ordained to be the overseer or Pastor the church.

These men are called in Ephesians chapter four "Gifts" to the church. These men are given to the church "for the perfecting of the saints...for the edifying of the body of Christ". No doubt most of the readers of this paper have experienced the blessing of this gift. A pastor is a gift and those churches that are without a pastor know that and miss it.

Now we need to ask a few questions: Who are these men? How can we know who they are? What does the Bible say?

Who these men are is obvious after they've been recognized by a Church as being God's servants. So we need to look and see *What the bible says so that we can know who these men are.*

In the Old Testament the Lord told Moses to set apart the sons of Aaron to be his ministers. The Levites were a unique group of people among Israel's tribes. It was Levi alone that was not given a portion in the Land of Promise, the Lord gave them something better. Numbers 18:20 "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: **I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.**" The LORD was their inheritance, they alone would be able to serve in the place of offering, they only would be able to enter the Holy place

where the LORD said He would dwell above the mercy seat. I ask you "What could be better than the LORD himself as your inheritance?"

But, not all the Levites were allowed to serve in the Tabernacle. The servants of the House of the Lord must meet some standards before they would be deemed acceptable to serve in the house of blood. We can see these limitations in the twenty first chapter of Leviticus. The restrictions covered who he married 21:7, 13-15, and what his physical characteristics were 21:17-21.

We point these out to show that from the first days of the Lord having ministers for his people, the corps of servants was not open to all comers, not even to all the Sons of Levi! In the New Testament Churches the same principle is found! Not all Christians can serve as the Pastor and not all men in the church can labor in the pulpit, it is a limited office. The Holy Spirit give in 1 Timothy and Titus the qualifications or the characteristics that a church should use to determine if a man is qualified. It is from these passages that we are taught what constitutes the candidate for the bishopric in the Lord's church.

In this day of apostasy (which has been present since the legalist descended on the Galatian churches) we need to be reminded of what the Bible says.

In these qualifications of a bishop (1 Timothy 3:1-7) God, as He did in Leviticus 21, covers all facets of His minister's life. Paul records what kind of character God's man is to possess in relation to his:

1. His Morality- v2 points to his past, blameless...
2. His Manner- v3 points to his prospects, not greedy, not covetous...
3. His Marriage- v4, 5 points to his present, rules well his family, in love,

judgment, correction, and mercy. This gives a good view of how he will lead the church

4. His Maturity- v6, 7 points to his principles, must have good report that he is Settled in his doctrine (essential, blood atonement, inspiration, salvation, etc.), steadfast in his duty as husband, father and pastor, and surrendered to his destiny the will of God.

It is abundantly clear that the Lord expects a great deal from the men He chooses for His churches. It should be the desire of His men to live up to our Lord's expectations or it leaves open the probability that they desire the prestige, power and praise of the position more than the holiness and humbleness that is required in it. There are many Baptists that are ministers that are mere hirelings. Men who are in it for what they get out of it, rather than solely for the "Glory of God".

When men are in the ministry to gratify their own selfish purposes, they will skirt or reason away God's qualifications. Sadly, this is why churches have no power with God in a real sense. And when successes are measured in numbers of members or baptisms in a year rather than absolute faithfulness to God, you've fallen for the devils lie.

An unqualified minister may be very persuasive, personable and likable to a congregation and has apparent outward success, but if he does not meet God's qualifications, no matter how it looks, he is unfit to offer the bread of God to a hungry world. These qualifications can be and are controversial in this day. Nevertheless, they should be followed in ordaining men to the ministry and in recalling ordination of men who become disqualified.

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The Biblical Role of the Wife

A Paper Prepared by
Debbie Fair



Introduction

In modern society, the roles of the husband and wife in marriage have been blurred by not only secularists, but Christians. While both men and women are created ‘in the image of God,’ they have very different roles, according to scripture.

In our text, Kostenberger says, “The Bible defines “family” in a narrow sense as the union of one man and one woman in matrimony which is normally blessed with one or several natural or adopted children. In a broad sense, this family also includes any other persons related by blood (the extended family). In the book of Genesis, we read that God in the beginning created first a man (Adam) to exercise dominion over his creation and subsequently a woman (Eve) as the man’s “suitable helper” (Genesis 2:18, 20).”¹

Geoffrey Bromiley says, “As God made man in His own image, so He made earthly marriage in the image of His own eternal marriage with His people.”²

The purpose of this paper is to address three questions:

- What are the roles of the husband in a Christian marriage?
- What are the roles of the wife in a Christian marriage?
- What is male headship and female submission as it relates to Christian marriage?

The modern debate in the Christian church regarding the issue of the relationship between men and women in marriage and the ministry is framed using two terms- complementarianism and egalitarianism.

Complementarianism is the view that men and women have ‘differing’ roles and responsibilities in marriage and the family. The man is given headship over the woman, but the woman’s role is not less than the man, but different. The wife is to be the helpmate, but not a servant or slave.

Egalitarianism holds that all human beings, regardless of gender, are created

equally in God’s sight and have equal responsibility to use their spiritual gifts in regard to roles in marriage, ministry and society. John Piper says, “Complementarians resist the impulses of a chauvinistic, dominating, and abusive culture, on the one side, and the impulses of a sex-blind, gender-leveling, unisex culture on the other side. And we take our stand between these two ways of life not because the middle ground is a safe place (which it is emphatically not), but because we think this is the good plan of God in the Bible for men and women.”³

What are the roles of the husband in a Christian marriage?

The apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:22-33, exhorts husbands are to love their wife with the sacrificial love of Christ. They are to love their wife as Christ loves the church (verse 25). They are to love their wife as they love their own body (verse 28). They are to love their wife more than their parents (verse 31).⁴

According to Kostenberger, “The husband’s leadership, as well as the wife’s submission, is to be exercised within the orbit of grace, rather than legalism or coercion.”⁵

Dennis Rainey in an article entitled, “What should be the husband’s role in marriage,” lists three responsibilities of a husband. (1) Be a leader, (2) Love your wife unconditionally, and (3) Serve your wife.⁶

John Piper and Wayne Grudem believe the Bible teaches that God means the relationship between husband and wife portrays the relationship between Christ and His Church. “The husband is to model the loving, sacrificial leadership of Christ, and the wife is to model the glad submission offered freely by the church. In the home, Biblical headship is the husband’s divine calling to take primary responsibility for Christ like leadership, protection, and provision.”⁷ When leading the family, especially when children are involved placed a great deal of responsibility on the husband.

According to Daniel Block, the father in ancient Israel had nine primary responsibilities:

- personally modeled strict fidelity to Yahweh
- lead the family in national festivals, nurtured the memory of Israel’s salvation
- instructed the family in the traditions of the exodus and Scriptures
- managing the family land in accordance with the law
- provide for the families basic needs
- defend the household against outside threats
- serve as elder and represents the household in the official assembly of citizens
- maintain family members’ well-being and harmonious operation of the family unit
- implementing decisions made at the clan or tribal level

Block compared the role of the father like ‘spokes of a wheel.’ Family life radiated outward from the father as its center.⁸

What are the roles of the wife in a Christian marriage?

In Ephesians 5, Paul says the wife is to submit herself to her husband (verse 22) in the same way the church submits to Christ. The wife is to reverence her husband (verse 33).⁹

Barbara Rainey says the wife’s role in marriage is fourfold: (1) Be a helper, (2) Respect your husband, (3) Love your husband, (4) Submit to the leadership of your husband. “Perhaps more than at any other time in history, women today need a clear understanding of how they should relate to their husbands. In fact, the significant social changes brought about by the women’s movement over the last few decades have led to such confusion that the very idea of “roles” is repugnant to some. They feel as if somehow they lose their identity and their freedom if they adhere to some type of “outdated standard.” Rainey writes.¹⁰

Proverbs 31 provides us a description of a model wife. In the Kostenberger text, he lists seventeen virtues of a godly wife found in that passage. A godly wife is:

- is a major asset to her husband (verse 10, 11)
- is a trusted companion (verse 11)
- is for and not against her husband; she has his well-being and best interests at heart (verse 12)
- is industrious and hardworking (verses 13, 27)
- procures and prepares food for her entire household (verses 14, 15)
- rises early (verse 15)
- locates and purchases real estate (verse 16)
- reinvests extra earnings from her home business (verse 16)
- is vigorous and energetic (verses 17, 25)
- produces clothes for her family and as merchandise (verses 13, 18-19, 21-22, 24)
- is kind to the poor, reaches out in mercy to the needy (verse 20)
- ensures that she and her children are properly and finely dressed (verses 21-22)
- contributes to others' respect for her husband and oversees her household so he can devote himself to a role of leadership in the community (verses 23, 27)
- is ready for the future and prepares for eventualities (verses 21, 25)
- displays wisdom in speech, and in the teaching of kindness (verse 26)
- is praised by her children and husband (verses 28-29, 31)
- is God-fearing rather than relying on her physical beauty (verse 30)

“While some might find this ideal unattainable, it is a worthy goal to which women today may aspire. This picture is consistent with God’s overall design for women as supportive partners of their husbands. She is a woman of great resourcefulness, who is a source of strength and an inestimable blessing to her husband and children.”¹¹

Elisabeth Elliot said, “Unlike Eve, whose response to God was calculating and self-serving, the virgin Mary’s answer holds no hesitation about risks or losses or the interruption of her own plans. It is an utter and unconditional self-giving: “I am the Lord’s servant . . . May it be to me as you have said” (Luke

1:38). This is what I understand to be the essence of femininity. It means surrender.”¹²

John MacArthur says, “Submission in no way implies a difference in essence or worth; it does refer, however, to a willing submission of oneself. Wives, submission is to be your voluntary response to God’s will—it’s a willingness to give up your rights to other believers in general and ordained authority in particular, in this case your own husband.”¹³

What is male headship and female submission as it relates to Christian marriage?

Some mistakenly believe that male headship and female submission is not a biblical concept, however scripture is clear the male is the head and the female is to submit to his authority.

According to Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr, the definition of male headship is: “In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.”¹⁴

John Stott says this about male headship: “If headship means ‘power’ in any sense, then it is power to care, not to crush; power to serve, not to dominate; power to facilitate self-fulfillment, not to frustrate or destroy it. And in all this the standard of the husband’s love is to be the cross of Christ, on which he surrendered himself even to death in his selfless love for his bride”¹⁵

According to Kostenberger, “headship entails not merely nurture, though it does that, but also a position of authority.”¹⁶

Ortlund defines female submission as: “the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband’s leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts.”¹⁷

Charles R. Erdman wrote, “Mere listless, thoughtless subjection is not desirable if ever possible. The quick wit, the clear moral discernment, the fine instincts of a wife make of her a counselor whose influence is invaluable and almost unbounded”¹⁸

According to Kostenberger, “the husband / wife relationship expresses how God through Christ relates to His people

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The Country Preacher

I BAPTIZED MYSELF BY ACCIDENT

by Pastor Darwin Robinson

East Tennessee has lots of rivers, creeks and back water swimming holes. Many of the country churches did not have inside baptistries back in the 60’s. Therefore the nearby rivers became very handy. The Lord had blessed and several were awaiting baptism. One of our members suggested a location near the town of South Pittsburg. Our church was located some eight miles back down the highway. I drove our church bus on this one hour route. I kept everyone on the bus this one Sunday following our morning services. Others drove over and we all ‘gathered at the river.’ This river flowed down the Tennessee valley of Battlecreek, through the town and there it crossed south into Alabama. It was a pretty large river and flowed fast.

We sang our hymns, had prayer and I entered the river. I did not ‘test’ the waters very far out because it was so swift. Not being raised up around rivers in west Texas, I broke two major ‘river baptizing rules.’ One: by not testing the waters all around me. Two: by not immersing my candidates with their backs toward the oncoming swift water.

My first candidates were young people and I had no difficulties, even in the churning waters. However, when Mr. Rector stepped into the waters and stood by me, I knew I had troubles. Mr. Rector was a large and tall man. His brothers and other kinfolk were all big lumberjack-size people. As if I knew what I was doing, I said my speech, and then I took a ‘giant step for mankind’ down stream. To my surprise, I stepped smack dab into a hole. We both went down stream several feet. I pulled Mr. Rector down to make sure he got immersed. But I went down with him, right up to my eyes. I had just baptized myself by accident! I did my best to pull Mr. Rector back up, but it became very apparent, ‘it was every man for himself.’ We both swam and wadded back to shore very embarrassed, but glad to be alive.

MORAL: “Even in Christianity, you are the only one responsible to get yourself to the other shore.” □

Hated By All Men — does anybody hate you?

by Terry Basham II

Matthew 10:22 *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

I was reading my Bible this morning and I hit this verse. Christ is telling the disciples what they can expect from society when they follow Him. Christ does not really offer them bright hopes and big money, oh no. He says “Boys, if you follow me, everyone will hate you.”

Hate— the word is very negative. In fact in this country committing a hate crime is about as loathsome as you can go... To do something to or to refuse someone a service because of *hate* is more intolerable than a man who kills a smiling, thumb sucking baby who is safely tucked into his mother’s womb.

We tell our kids not to say Hate — because it is a strong word. Hate — when we say we hate something we are saying “My desire is that I NEVER ENCOUNTER this again!” I hate some stuff and I will do about anything to avoid those things. I mean I will drive to avoid them, I will go without to miss them; hey, when you hate something — you want it out of your life forever.

People hate cold weather, so they move to Florida or south Texas, maybe Arizona. Some people hate commercials so they TEVO everything so they can avoid the commercials. My wife hates mice, she had me stop ever hole in the house to keep those little things out! My daughters hate the dark, so we have nightlights everywhere!

When you hate you take action! You do something. People hate abortion so they figure out every way possible to keep people from being able to get one. They defund, they protest, they create crisis pregnancy centers to talk people out of it or they get wild and do crazy stuff.

Animal rights people hate hunting, so they spend hunting season harassing hunters. Hate is a strong word and a strong emotion.

Now, notice what Jesus says “All men will hate you because you have gone out in my name.” They will hate you because of me. This is not a lesser kind of hate than that which we’ve

already described, it is not hate light! All men will hate you because of me. Today we are beginning to see for the first time in a long time. God’s people have always been persecuted at different levels even from day one in this country. There is always someone who dislikes Christians and wants to make their life tougher but what Christ promises here is hatred. Hated by all men.

Have you felt? Have you spoken to a man and had him in just a few words become like an old friend? You know what I mean an instant camaraderie? And everything is just peachy until you say something about Jesus... then it all changes in a moment. You can see the darkness cloud his face, his brow furrows and it is because he has just seen that you, YOU, YOU ARE ONE OF THOSE KIND!!! This new friend had high hopes for you and him! This could have been one of those friendships of a lifetime that start with just a casual meeting, you know the kind that books are written about and movies are made of! But not now, no, you are one of the Jesus people. A real square, a very un-cool person and in reality a dumb person because only dumb people are into that religion stuff. Have you experienced that? If not, you will.

Jesus our Lord says expect to be hated.

He says in this same chapter that your Father, Mother, Brother and Sister probably will hate you. In another account he says even one’s spouse may hate you. This hatred is not because you have become an evil beast, it is because you have taken up with Jesus, it because you dare to say “Christ is the savior.”

The name of Jesus Christ is the most hated name in the world. My wife commented on the Facebook page for an artist that she likes and she (my wife) said “Only Christ can cure the ills of society.” The reaction to that was for someone to report her comment to face book’s posting rules committee as violation of Facebook policies. It is not that Facebook has rules against Jesus or religion, someone reported her comment

as containing “nudity”. It was just a way for a person who hates Jesus to try to get the NAME of Christ removed. They hate him, the hate his name and they hate his people.

Jesus says that if you run with me, if you bear my name you will be hated. Expect it.

Why? Why all the hate for Jesus? John 3.20a “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light”, the light is Jesus. (John 1) Because he reveals to them and to *others* that they are evil and that their deeds are evil, they hate him. They hate to have people really know how bad they are.

This summer we saw the videos of Planned Parenthood Representatives brokering the sale of the organs of children who had been killed... When those videos came out, there was an outcry from Planned Parenthood, they were incensed? Why were they mad? They were mad because somebody showed the world what they really are— a slaughterhouse that has daily specials on certain “cuts of meat.”

When you shine the gospel light on people they get very angry. How angry? Well, they arrested Jesus on trumped up charges, got witnesses to lie about him, brought political pressure to bear and killed him. So then can get pretty mad and will do just about anything.

Oh My Brothers and Sisters

Be warned— expect hostility.

Those who hate us, who hate you may begin to love you.

Also expect to see this episode played over and over.

A Christian named Stephen preached the gospel and the people who heard it were enraged and they stoned him to death. One of the by standers was a man named Saul and in a short while, this man who consented to and who approved of the killing of Stephen was converted served the Lord of Stephen. Then he (Paul the Apostle) was hated and killed by those who hate him.

I John 3.13 “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” □

"So, This Isn't Big?"

by Pastor Bobby Mitchell

I had preached my heart out. It was a favorite passage and subject and I tried to pour myself into it, hoping to stir the church to do something BIG! David and Goliath. We could be David. We could really do something big if we just caught David's vision! We could make everyone, the world and the Lord's people, sit up and take notice that BIG things were being done by Mid-Coast Baptist Church.

Then Monday came and I was talking about it with my Dad. Thank God for a man who is not a silly, bobble-headed cheerleader type, but who loves the Lord and loves me enough to challenge me to actually think Scripturally and soberly. I think I will always remember the idea he floated. I do not remember the exact words (it was more than ten years ago), but it was something like, "So being the Lord's church, simply learning His Word, and obeying it, seeing souls saved and believers growing in the Lord, isn't big? What we are doing as we obey the Lord isn't big?"

"Well, I, uh (cough, sputter), I mean, of course that's big, but I want to see God do something REALLY HUGE! Don't you?" was my response.

I sat down and felt discouraged and we said a few more words before chang-

ing the subject, but the thought stuck with me. The more I considered Scripture the more I realized that my "BIG IDEA" and "SOMETHING BIG" mentality needed to be exchanged for what truly is the BEST, the BIGGEST, the actual will of God. I needed to just be the faithful servant of the Lord, leading other servants of the Lord to glorify the Lord by doing His will, as revealed in His Word, by His grace.

Another look at the account of David and Goliath had me noticing that David was simply obeying His father, Jesse, as he took supplies to his brothers at the battlefield. While there, an opportunity presented itself to obey God in another matter. David did the will of God by faith. God was glorified.

You know what might really be a big thing in this day in which so many are trumping God's thoughts with their own, replacing God's plans and programs with man's, and trying to rally everyone to their cause that they claim is the Lord's? How about this— Obey God's Word by His grace and for His glory alone! Is there something bigger than that?

Friend, if you are a member of one of the Lord's churches, where you are receiving His Word with humility and

In 1986, just two days before his 12th birthday, Bobby Mitchell was saved by the grace of God. A few weeks later he was Scripturally baptized into a Baptist church where his father, Bob Mitchell, Sr., served as pastor. The Lord immediately placed a desire in his heart to preach the Bible. Since April of 1989 he has been fulfilling that burden at every opportunity. He received his pastoral training from his pastor/father who taught him the Word of God and trained him in the context of the church. In 1997 he was sent by a Baptist church in Virginia to assist his father in fulfilling the Great Commission in Brunswick, Maine. The Lord blessed their efforts and the Mid-Coast Baptist Church was established in 1999. Since his ordination in 2002, Bobby has been the pastor there. The Lord has blessed Bobby and Dayna, his wife of eighteen years, with one son and six daughters. He strives to preach and pastor for the glory of God and for the benefit of the church of God that he loves and serves. He is one of the authors of *A Pure Church*.

obedience, then YOU ARE IN THE BIGGEST POSSIBLE PROGRAM ON EARTH! You can't do bigger than God's will. Praise God and press on! □

Help from the Readers!

When I first landed in Lawton I was able to speak to Pastor Keener on the phone a couple of times. The Lord called him over to the glory land before we could meet in person. He told me that he was looking forward to moving to Lawton, and to serving the Lord once again at Bethel. I am still sorry I did not have the blessing of serving with him.

I sent him an email and asked if he would write an article on the subject of when a fallen or disqualified pastor may resume the pastorate; but that never came to be. So I ask you, dear readers, if you would be so kind as to send your answers to the following questions, so I can compile some material for an article on this subject.

The Questions:

1. Can a pastor who has been removed because of sinful behavior be restored to the same pulpit or to another pulpit?
2. Does it depend on the type of sin committed?
3. Should a church keep a dismissed pastor as a member?
4. Does the dismissing church have a responsibility to warn other churches about an unrepentant minister?
5. As the number of ministers grow fewer who are sovereign grace, use the Authorized Version in the pulpit and pew, and hold traditional, historic views of polity, worship and preaching, does a church need to be more careful in dismissal of pastors?

Please send your replies to: or email us at bethelbaptistlawton@gmail.com
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and the church. Thus it can be truly said that families have a vital part to play in God's plan to "bring all things and on earth together under one head, even Christ," for the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:10-12)"¹⁹

Conclusion

The scripture is clear- husbands are to lead and wives are to submit, according to Ephesians 5. All too often, the clear distinct roles outlined in scripture have been ignored, resulting in abusive relationships and bitterness. The misuse of authority by husbands and failure to honor their husbands by wives have resulted in a breakdown of the modern family.

Kostenberger says, "The man and the woman are jointly charged with ruling the earth representatively for God, yet they are not to do so androgynously or as 'unisex' creatures, but each as fulfilling their God ordained, gender specific roles."²⁰

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Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, (1994).

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Qualifications, continued from Page 1

Also, it should be remembered, in the OT the offerings were made for the Priests as well as the people to cover their sins, but the blood of those offerings could not remove the blemish in the eye, crooked back or fix the flat nose. (See Lev. 21) These Levites were still disqualified to offer the bread of God. Therefore, in the NT, salvation certainly fits you for heaven, but not necessarily for the office of Bishop or deacon.

The blood of Jesus does cleanse from all sin, but the scars of some those transgressions can remain and be disqualifying from the bishopric. A qualification is a requirement that must be met. These are not options to twist to fit personal manners or moral purview.

If a man desires the office of a bishop his character and conduct of life must be to the level of God's qualifications. And God, being sovereign, knows every thought and intent of the heart and he will only call those that meet the criteria for His church officers. *1 Timothy 1:12-13 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

There are things, as Paul says, that a man may have done before he was saved, but there are things also that leave a blemish that cannot be removed. Such could be, child out of wedlock, child molestation, divorce and remarriage, these can be destructive to a man's testimony and to the Lord's church he is trying to pastor.

There was a man who was a pastor that held strong convictions and a very dynamic preacher. Earlier before he was saved and married, he had an illicit affair. It produced a child. He later was saved and believed he was called to the ministry. However, this mother of his child spent years chasing him all over country to get him to take responsibility for his child. When they would locate him, he would resign the church and move to another state. And would become pastor of another unsuspecting church. At the least he would be disqualified under the first qualification, blameless,

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless... Even, though his salvation

occurred after the child's birth. He never married this woman, but did marry another lady and had children with her.

The husband of one wife issue is a hot topic of today. Marriage is a sacred institution that should not be entered into lightly, no matter whether the couple is saved or unsaved. It is to be a lifelong commitment of a man and woman. Husband of one wife has been interpreted and reinterpreted over and over, but here are verses that should never be overlooked in connection to *1 Timothy 3:2. Romans 7:2-3 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

A man may be divorced by the law of the land but according to God's law the woman is still his wife. Therefore, if he marries another he has two living wives rendering him disqualified to offer the bread of God to the Lord's churches.

This writer realizes this a controversial issue and it is not his intent to run what he perceives as disqualified men out the ministry. It is his intent to teach the Lord's churches what kind of men they need for the offices of pastors and deacons. By the way, women are never qualified for either of the two offices of the church.

Finally, men of the Lord's churches and the congregation need to keep in mind:

1. The Ministry is a High Calling.

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.

The Holy Ghost has placed His men in their position as overseers of His possession (church) that Christ purchased with His own Blood. That is a special calling, a serious calling and a selfless calling making it a High Calling by the most High God where there is no room for selfishness on the part of His men.

2. The Ministry is an Honorable Commitment.

1 Timothy 1:11] According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. [12] And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

The Lord has honored His men by committing to us His GLORIOUS GOSPEL. What a privilege to be put in trust of something, so pure, so precious, so powerful it raises sinners from the dead. Therefore, as God's men, we should honor Him by being committed to this great trust, proclaiming His given truth and above all, practicing every precept that the Holy Spirit guides us into without fear, favor or fleshly motive.

3. The Ministry is a Humbling Challenge.

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. [8] For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. [9] And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Someone once said, "God gives us enough success to keep us going, and enough failure to keep us humble." It's also been put this way, "the successes belong to God and the failures belong to me." Suffice to say, humility is the most essential quality of God's man. It keeps you quiet when you want to lash out or lay blame somewhere else. It keeps you patient when you want to react at criticism, or during seasons of opposition, obstruction or oppression. The Apostle makes it clear in the previous verses, God intended to keep him humble. Paul gloried in his weakness for these were opportunities to experience the power of an almighty God. Every opposition by the world: government restriction or regulation, compromising influences, etc. Every obstruction by the flesh: family disagreement, financial shortfall, female temptation, etc., and Every oppression

by the devil: doubt, fear, defeat or setback are the times when God shows Himself faithful and mighty. The Bible is replete with episodes when His men or people are in hopeless and helpless situations to where they are humbled, He gloriously reveals Himself in powerful and spectacular ways. And He alone is glorified.

That is the ministry. Meeting God's qualifications for the ministry is all about our humility and His Glory. May we His ministers fall prostrate before Him and watch as He shows himself mighty in His power to save, strengthen and sustain His people. *Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* □

KEENER THOUGHTS *from May 2003*

They Who Despitefully Use You

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you (Luke 6:28)

This verse has only one word with more than one syllable. It is very easy to

read, so long as we only read it with the end of our finger, our eyes, or our mouths, and most of us can quote it by memory. Oh, but once it penetrates our minds or our hearts, if we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, we will have to cry out, "Woe is me, for I am undone." The hypocrite will have no trouble with it, but the person who walks in the fear of God will be strongly rebuked in his heart. However, a great danger that faces us is that we can hear the words, and even acquiesce to the concept, without feeling very much personal guilt. One reason for that is that we almost always view those real, true-to-life situations far too subjectively. Being used spitefully or using another spitefully is not as clearly defined to our depraved minds as we might expect. To every natural man, it becomes a matter of perception. Frequently two honest people who each feel misused or even abused, can easily see the other person as the offender, or the abuser, and themselves as having acted righteously. At least, they are not too guilty, since they were only responding to another's unfair or improper treatment. "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the

LORD pondereth the hearts." (Pro 21:2) I have seen great amounts of time spent in trying to get each person to see the issue from the other man's point of view, and usually, very little success is realized. I have even been involved in legal arbitration, and essentially, neither side is changed very much as to perception of any righteousness on the other's part. Why, when Christian people put their hearts into such endeavor, can't they come to agreement? Could it be we approach it altogether wrongly?

The Lord did not say hash it out and make a judgment in the matter. He said "Love,...and pray for..." This word love, as most often used in Biblical Christian admonition, has far more to do with conduct than with feelings. Nor did he say pray for those who spitefully use you if they will cease to mistreat you. This admonition deals with our conduct not with that of our offender. We are being admonished to walk above the circumstances and do good, without regard to the conduct of others. This is usually not easy, but it is God's instruction for us. Let us seek to do right, and walk in charity, regardless of others.

~FLK



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