

DOES DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE DISQUALIFY A MAN FROM PASTORING?

All scripture is taken from the King James Bible KJV

An answer to those who believe divorce and remarriage disqualifies a man from pastoring.

From the website of a good typical Independent Fundamental Baptist Church:

We believe God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery in the eyes of God. If there is a divorce, the Word of God says that the divorced spouses are to remain unmarried or be reconciled. Although divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the Church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon. Mal. 2:14-17; Matt. 19:2-12; Rom. 7:1-3; 1Cor. 7:10-11; 1Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6

While these beliefs are sincere and guided by a desire to stay within the bounds of Scripture, they are sadly wrong. We will argue each point and give solid reasoning in line with the Scripture to show why these teachings: One, Disregard the dispensational divisions of the Bible in regards to divorce and remarriage: Two, Show why the teaching has disenfranchised hundreds of good pastors while churches are closing all over America for lack of such: Three, Show the unintended hypocrisy of this teaching when it deals with "qualifications" for the ministry as found in I Timothy and Titus.

These teaching have been handed down from teacher to student without the student doing any serious study of the subject. We are all guilty of failure to be "Bereans".

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11

We believe God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies

The first sentence of the above is a half-truth. It is true that God intends marriage to last until one of the spouse dies. It is also true that this is a general statement of truth and is not always the case. In some cases God commands men to put away their wives and will not bless the nation until they have. The book of Ezra documents this clearly.

"And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." Ezra 10:2

"Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law." Ezra 10:3

"Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it." Ezra 10:4

"Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swore." Ezra 10:5

It will immediately be objected that these were outlandish women and that this was an Old Testament occurrence. I will agree with the objection, nevertheless, one cannot say that God never sanctions divorce.

We believe divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery in the eyes of God.

While there is scripture that teaches exactly what the above scripture says, the scripture is taken out of context, which is Jesus teaching the Pharisees what the rules for marriage and divorce would be in his Kingdom, when he reigns in the millennium. See the lengthy discussion in my articles on dispensations and divorce at

["http://www.sounddoctrine.com/hardscript.htm"](http://www.sounddoctrine.com/hardscript.htm) and

["http://www.sounddoctrine.com/divorce.htm"](http://www.sounddoctrine.com/divorce.htm) these two articles will show conclusively that the statement above them is scripturally sound. For anyone sincerely interested in the truth, and will take the time to review them, I stand ready to be corrected if you can prove me wrong.

I will give a very brief review of what is dealt with in detail.

Scripture is to be rightly divided.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

That simply means that you need to know who the particular scripture was addressing. Was it the Jew, or the Gentiles? Was the information in the Gospels or the Pauline epistles? It makes a difference. The Gospels, while found in the "New Testament" are actually Old Testament Books until the resurrection of Christ. That is why Jesus told the leper he healed to show himself to the priest and offer the proper sacrifice. He told the disciples that: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:" Matthew 23:2 "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." Matthew 23:3

Jesus calling was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was a minister of the circumcision.

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matthew 15:24
Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: Romans 15:8

Paul was called "the minister of God to the Gentiles."

"That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Romans 15:16

When Jesus told the Pharisee's that divorce and remarriage constituted Adultery, it could not apply across the board to every dispensation. In the Old Testament a man could divorce his wife for any perceived "uncleanness". Where do we get our information on the subject viewed under grace? Paul. In Paul's dissertation on marriage in I Cor. 7, the final statement on the whole matter was Paul saying:

"I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you." 1 Cor. 7:26-28

It is clear from the first verse in 1 Cor. 7, that those carnal Corinthian believers had a better understanding of dispensational truth than the average Independent Baptist preacher has. He writes to them:

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” 1 Cor. 7:1, they knew Matthew 19 didn't apply doctrinally, so they asked Paul for advice on the matter.

The statement of faith includes:

We believe that although divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the Church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon.

Let's look carefully at this Scripture.

1 This is a true saying, if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Here is the offending portion of scripture. Verse two. A Bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife. It is commonly taught that since a man that has been divorced and remarried he obviously has two wives and cannot be a pastor. That interpretation flies in the face of common sense, and displays a scant understanding of history or the meaning of words. Please stay with me. If you end up disagreeing, you will at least know the other side of the story.

In the Old Testament, when a man gave his wife a bill of divorcement and married another woman, was he then the husband of two wives? Not according to God himself. When he gave her the bill of divorcement, she could then become another man's wife.

Deuteronomy 24:1- 2 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

If the standard held by New Testament Baptist pastors held true, she would be married to two men at the same time! When Jesus told the Pharisees that a woman would be an adulterous if she divorced her husband and remarried, he was completely right according to Old Testament standards. She could NOT divorce her husband. There is no provision under the law for a woman to divorce her husband! If she left for another man she was an adulterous! Not quite "women's lib" back then. The man could initiate a divorce, but the lady was stuck with him.

When God divorced Israel He said she was NOT his wife! His divorce from Israel was a complete dissolution of his “marriage” to her.”

Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. Isaiah 50:1

Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Hosea 2:2

This verse completely overthrows the teaching that a divorce does not completely dissolve the bonds of marriage, as does Romans 7, addressed above.

Polygamy, I know you're already arguing, just finish reading! For an honest pastor, that wants truth rather than what he was taught in seminary and just took home with him, we offer this historical truth which holds true today in countries like Papua New Guinea where my daughter is a missionary. Polygamy is an accepted part of their culture. My son in law had to show them that someone with two living wives, living with him at the same time could not be justified any longer as pastor in the church. History shows the Jewish people, steeped in polygamy forming the New Testament church. While the Roman government frowned on polygamy, its practice was widespread during the early church. Paul was saying nothing more than a man who was polygamous could not pastor a church. There was a new standard. Two or more wives living with one man, David, Solomon was now out. That's why the Mormon Church was outlawed in its practice of polygamy in the U.S. The United States at one time had a sense of morality that it has lost. Christians have substituted man's teaching and traditions for the scripture. The teaching that a man who has been divorced and remarried is not qualified to pastor is a Roman Catholic doctrine adopted by unwitting Baptists.

Let's close this section of this article by going one step further. Why stop with divorce and remarriage? The verse says to be a bishop, a man must be blameless. Well brethren, that eliminates most of us right there. Could any of you saved sinners claim to be blameless? What about a man whose children are unruly? I know pastors whose kids are outright rebels. I wonder how that lines up with:

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Should those pastors also "step down"? Don't hold your breath waiting.

Some pastors won't come to pastor your church unless the church meets his financial expectations. No living by faith for these fellows. Don't pay me enough, find another man. Would I classify someone like that as greedy of filthy lucre? God might.

Now let's deal with Malachi 2:14-16

Yet ye say, wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. Malachi 2:14, and did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit and therefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. Malachi 2:15 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit that ye deal not treacherously. Malachi 2:16

Please notice a couple of things. 1. The Lord witnessed the man dealing treacherously against the wife of his youth. The Old Testament standard was that a man could divorce his wife for "any uncleanness". These men were giving their wives bills of divorcement for no good reason. They wanted to use the privilege of divorce to satisfy their own lust. This was what God hated. The man "covereth violence with his garment". God wanted a Godly seed, treachery would not produce one. But he did not overthrow Deuteronomy 24:1. It was in effect as he spoke! He was giving "kingdom doctrine".

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. Deuteronomy 24:1

Please notice also that there is no mention of any of this affecting the qualifications of a New Testament Pastor. Let's be honest. If you want to prove a divorced and remarried man cannot pastor, you cannot use this verse to prove your point. It says nothing one way or the other about the issue.

Let's deal some more with the passage in I Timothy and repeated in Titus.

According to most Baptist pastors, this passage contains the qualifications a man must have to hold the office of a Bishop. Let's start.

1. All the pastors that are not blameless should quit the ministry. That will take care of most of us.
2. All pastors that do not maintain vigilance should be disqualified. What is "vigilance"? Does the average pastor even know?
3. Any pastor that does not teach, only preaches, should step down. I know pastors like this.
4. If a pastor is given to wine (take a little for your stomach's sake) – there is enough alcohol in Nyquil™ to qualify it as “wine”.
5. If you cannot keep your temper at all times, no striker you do not qualify.
6. You cannot be greedy of money. There goes another bunch of “one marriage only hypocrites”.
7. You must be patient! No preacher qualifies 100% on this point. If you say you do, I'm calling you on it!
8. Cannot be covetous ever!
9. Cannot be a novice. How old in the Lord do you have to be? Eliminate anyone not more than ten years old in the Lord?
10. Must be married and have children. How can you keep your children in subjection if you are not married? Don't you need to be married and have kids to raise so you can understand how to preach on "the family"? Looks like a man with a barren wife does not qualify, do you see how ridiculous this is getting!

It should be clear now to the simplest mind that the “qualifications” listed are actually NOT. They are guidelines that no pastor fulfills fully at all times. Looking for a Pastor? Shoot high, but don't exclude a good man for failing in some of these, especially a man whose wife left him unscriptural, and he then remarried a godly woman.

“...For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” Romans 11:29

When God calls a man to preach and he is really called, that call is never rescinded. If his wife leaves him and he burns in his heart for female companionship and help, he should find a godly woman and get married and continue to preach the pure word of God.

You'd better get away from judging a man that God has his hand on. God says:

“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.” Romans 14:4

Please consider this carefully. If you are wrong, you will be guilty of keeping good men that did nothing wrong, whose wives left them alone, out of ministering and fulfilling the call on them. You won't want to face that at the Judgment seat of Christ!