



Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. John 1:29

Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed Revelation 5:5

LION & LAMB CHURCH

Lion & Lamb Church Statement on Divorce and Remarriage related to potential Elders and Deacons

Lion & Lamb Church desires to recognize those men Christ has gifted and called to serve in this local portion of His body. We understand that men Christ has called and gifted will display the characteristics of Christ likeness mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Briefly stated, the personal characteristics listed are consistent with a healthy, mature, and growing Christian; leaders in the Church are meant to be models, though imperfect ones, of Christ likeness.

Paul mentions in both his first letter to Timothy and in his letter to Titus, that among the other qualifiers that should be true of potential leaders, they should be “the husband of one wife”, NASB. In the Greek language of the New Testament, the phrase could more literally be read a “one woman man”.

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife... 1 Timothy 3:2

...if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife... Titus 1:5-6

The question arises as to what the phrase means, and does it preclude men who are otherwise qualified, but who have been divorced and remarried, from serving the Church as Elders and Deacons?

It should be noted that, like other areas of Scripture and practice, there is no clear consensus in the Church at large on this issue. In our own leadership group there is greater or lesser degree of agreement on the understanding of these passages and therefore what represents their appropriate implementation. We also recognize in humility that the consensus of this body of leaders may be wrong. Other godly Church leaders have come to more restrictive conclusions about this important question, which conclusions we respect. While we don't have absolute certainty on this issue, we recognize the need for a working policy related to recognizing, or not recognizing in positions of leadership, men who are otherwise qualified, but who are also divorced and remarried.

For the sake of Church policy, we understand “one woman man” to describe the current state of a man's life, and not necessarily his entire past life. As such, a man who has been formerly divorced and remarried, but whose present life is characterized by faithfulness to his current wife would potentially be an acceptable candidate for recognition in leadership.

Our understanding is affected by the following:

1. No leader is perfect. The list of qualifications for leaders are meant to describe a person who is characterized by Christ likeness, and is therefore an example for other Christians to emulate, not a sinless person since such do not exist (1 John 1:8).
2. A man may have been characterized by a sinful and deficient past, such as Paul (1 Timothy 1:16) and yet be so transformed by the grace of God at work in his life, that he becomes in time Christ's servant and a servant leader to others.



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3. Regarding the other leadership qualifications given by Paul, no man will prove absolutely faithful either in his present experience, or in his past. Past “perfection” in a marriage should not be seen as uniquely absolute in the list of qualifications. If perfection in past marital status is required, it could be pressed that “perfection” in all other areas also be required. If so, then a man who had any notable past sin in the way of intemperance, imprudence, lack of hospitality, drunkenness, a combative nature, or greediness, could not be approved as a leader, and no man who had children who were ever less than “under control”, could be approved for leadership.

4. It is unlikely that “one woman man” is meant to be taken as an absolute. If it were, then a man who was widowed and remarried would not be qualified for leadership, though Scripture is clear elsewhere that marriage after the death of a spouse has no censure (Romans 7:2).

Identical language is used in 1 Timothy 5:9 (“wife of one man” NASB) related to a widow being put on Church support. If the phrase was understood to be absolute, then the widow who had remarried and lost her second husband would not be eligible for Church support, a scenario that doesn’t appear to be intended and would be difficult to defend.

Additionally, if “one woman man” is understood as an absolute, then an unmarried man could not serve as an Elder or Deacon. Paul was an Elder of Elders, yet appears to have been unmarried.

5. It may be pressed that marriage is such a unique commitment in life, since it is intended as a lifelong covenant as well as a living example of Christ’s love for the Church, that it holds a particularly high requirement that should carry over relative to a man’s ability to lead in Christ’s Church. However, at some very basic level, this understanding seems to cut at the very nature of Christ’s redemptive work in which He redeems and changes those who were formerly alienated from Christ and His life, but who have now been redeemed and transformed into His image. (1 Corinthians 6:11).

We conclude, at least for the policy of recognizing leaders, that a “one woman man” describes a man who is now recognized for Christ like love and service to his current wife.

At the same time, it should be noted that the availability of God’s forgiveness to the repentant, the fact that one may be washed, sanctified and justified would not necessarily be seen as adequately meeting the standard for recognition for leadership in the Church. One who is otherwise qualified, but who has experienced multiple marriage failures may raise serious concerns as to the stability and constancy required for recognition in leadership, even though repentance is present. Additionally, the more devastation present in one’s past, the greater the concern that the person is not “above reproach” with all those previously affected.

In considering a man for recognition as an Elder or Deacon who has formerly been divorced and remarried, the following questions would be investigated:

What was the cause of the previous marital failure?

If the failure was notably tied to the man’s attitudes and conduct, have those attitudes and conducts been significantly changed?

Has repentance to God and to the former wife, children, family, etc. been clearly expressed, and has all been done that can be to restore and heal those relationships?"



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Are there any unresolved issues from the former relationship that need to be resolved (Matthew 5:23-24).

Would recognition of a potential leader be considered hypocritical or otherwise deficient by the former wife, children, or former extended family and relatives?

Would the recognition of the divorced and remarried leader bring unnecessary turmoil to the Church?

It should be remembered that a man is assumed to be living an exemplary life for him to be considered for the role of Elder or Deacon. The additional scrutiny in relation to a man who has been divorced and remarried is to make sure, as much as possible, that past failure in marriage, the most serious of human relationships, does not render the potential leader, or the Church, compromised in the ability to lead clearly for Christ's honor and the good of His Church.