



ISSUE

23.44

October 31, 2021

# Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF  
THE OL-  
SEN PARK  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

## Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

## Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

## Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

## Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

## “The Husband of One Wife”

By Kyle Pope

In the qualifications for both elders and deacons, there is a phrase that is often debated and highly controversial—**“the husband of one wife”** (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6; cf. 1 Tim. 3:12). Most readily acknowledge that this qualification excludes women, the unmarried, and polygamists from serving as elders or deacons. The question is if this qualification also excludes the widower, the widower who has remarried, the divorcee, or the divorcee who has remarried.

### The Wording of the Text

To answer this let us first consider some facts about the wording the Holy Spirit uses here. In all three instances, the Greek text is composed of only three words: (1) *mia*, the feminine form of the word “one”; (2) *gunē*, the word used to mean both “woman” and “wife”; and (3) *anēr*, the word used to mean both “man” and “husband.” *Mia* and *gunē* are both possessive in form, and work together to communicate the concept, “of one woman.” With slight form differences concerning whether *anēr* acts as subject, object, or in its plural form, its use is essentially the same in all three passages. The phrase is literally, “a man of one woman.” It is important to note that Greek does not have distinct words (as we do in English) for a male and female who

are married as opposed to a male and female who are unmarried. So while it may be accurate to translate *gunē* “wife” and *anēr* “husband,” we must not allow English distinctions to determine our interpretation of the meaning.

### The Widower

Jesus taught in His discourse with the Sadducees that the marriage covenant is severed by death (Matt. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40). In the hypothetical example of the seven brothers who each die after marrying the same woman, although **“they all HAD her”** (Matt. 22:28, emphasis mine) Jesus makes it clear that upon their death she was not the “woman of” any of the men. He taught, **“In the resurrection they nei-**

**ther marry nor are given in marriage”** (Matt. 22:30). Paul may call upon this very teaching in both Romans and 1 Corinthians, in declaring that, **“a wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives”** (1 Cor. 7:39; cf. Rom. 7:2). A man whose wife has died is not therefore, the **“man of one woman”** in that no covenant binding him to a woman remains in force.

The texts outlining qualifications for elders and deacons do not state whether these qualifications are *prerequisite* (i.e. conditions required before service) or *concurrent* (i.e. conditions necessary during service). While we may incline toward one view or another, to truly satisfy the wording of the text any of the qualifications must exist at the present for one to meet the qualifications of an elder or deacon. For example, few would argue that a man **“not given to wine”** (Titus 1:7) before serving as an elder remains qualified if he comes to be “given to wine” as an elder. In the same way, the man who was the **“man of one woman”** when appointed, yet loses his wife while serving could no longer be described as the **“man of one woman.”\*** On the other hand, a man who has been widowed and yet remarried is properly

---

\* 1 Timothy 5:9 teaches that a qualification for a widow taken into the number is that **“she HAS BEEN the wife of one man”** (emphasis mine). While this helps us understand the meaning of **“husband of one wife,”** it does not address questions about qualifications for an elder or deacon. Not only does 1 Timothy 5:9 identify the woman as a **“widow,”** the Greek uses a perfect participle in reference to her condition—she is lit. **“in a state of having been the woman of one man.”** That is not the wording of the qualifications for elders or deacons.

the “**man of one woman.**” He has never been in a condition in which two living women have had any type of binding covenantal relationship to him.

### The Divorcee

Jesus’s teaching on divorce and remarriage was no more convenient in His own time than it is today. He taught a radical level of commitment to the marriage covenant that surpassed the standards of His own day just as it surpasses the standards of our times. This is evident from the reaction of His disciples to His teaching, when they declared, “**If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry**” (Matt. 19:10). Even so, this revolutionary teaching sets a new standard for mankind that must never be diluted to meet generational preferences.

*What is this revolutionary teaching?* We should note that in two of the four texts that record the Lord’s teaching on divorce and remarriage no exception is stated—rather, the principle is simply taught that divorce and remarriage constitutes adultery (Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18). In the two passages that record an exception (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:1-9) the same principle underlies the Lord’s doctrine, yet the phrases “**for any reason except for sexual immorality**” (Matt. 5:32) and “**except for sexual immorality**” (Matt. 19:9) are inserted to qualify the cause of the divorce. The inference is that while all other remarriage is “**adultery,**” remarriage for the one who has put away his or her mate for “**sexual immorality**” is not “**adultery.**”

To consider how this teaching relates to the “**husband of one wife**” qualification, let’s first consider a divorcee who has not remarried. An unmarried divorcee might be in this condition for a few different rea-

sons. He may have been put away. If he was put away because of “**sexual immorality,**” even though he might be repentant of this sin, he would be disqualified because of several other qualifications (e.g. “**blameless,**” “**of good behavior**” – 1 Tim. 3:2; “**one who rules his own house well**” – 1 Tim. 3:4; “**a good testimony among those who are outside**” – 1 Tim. 3:7; etc.). On the other hand, he might have been put away for another cause. Would either man properly be “**a man of one woman?**” Yes and no! Both men might have only *had* one wife, but unlike the qualifications for widows in 1 Timothy 5:9 the “**husband of one wife**” qualification does not include the words “**has been.**” Further, although unscriptural divorce violates Christ’s Law (Matt. 19:6), it is not as though God “does not recognize” (as we sometimes hear it said) the divorce. Two people who have broken their marriage covenant no longer *belong* to one another in the same



sense. However, Jesus's teaching makes it clear that unscriptural divorce does not remove one's obligation before God to his or her commitment to the marriage covenant. The one put away remains **"bound by law"** for life (cf. Rom. 7:2). This is why remarriage, is not simply sexual immorality but **"adultery"** (i.e. the sexual violation of a marriage covenant).

What about the divorcee who has put away his wife for **"sexual immorality"**? Such a man might remain unmarried. In such a case, in one sense he is not **"a man of one woman,"** in that his bond to his adulterous mate is severed. So what if the man chose to remarry? According to the Law of Christ, he would be within his rights to do so, and such would not constitute **"adultery."**

Yet, would he be **"a man of one woman"**? If we rely on our English distinctions and render the qualification **"husband"** and **"wife"** we might answer quickly—yes, he is the **"HUSBAND of one wife."** But remember, this distinction was not in the original text. Although he is within his rights to remarry, and he is not bound to any other woman, his adulterous put away wife remains **"bound"** to him to some degree in that her remarriage would constitute **"adultery."** Is he then **"a man of one woman"**? No. Two women are bound to him—one in lawful marriage, and the put away adulterous wife in an obligation before God that restricts her from ever remarriage. While such a man may serve God faithfully he does not meet the qualification that he is **"a man of one woman."**



Faithful Sayings Issue 23.44 October 31, 2021

4700 Andrews Ave.  
Amarillo TX 79106  
806-352-2809  
[www.olsenpark.com](http://www.olsenpark.com)

# Welcome Visitors