

## The Bishop #4

*"Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work"* (1 Tim. 3:1). This is the last of four articles regarding the bishop. In this article we will review the questions relating to the bishop and his family.

Having stated that the bishop MUST be without reproach, the apostle begins *"the husband of one wife"* (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). This requirement means that the bishop must not be a polygamist. The practice of having many wives was common in Paul's day, as even today one finds countries which allows men to have a plurality of wives (Some parts of the Philippines, for instance). Polygamy began to be practiced even before Abraham, or for that matter, before the flood. Lamech, seventh generation from Adam's, through Cain, was the first who is recorded to have had more than one spouse (Gen. 4:19-24). Abraham likewise had two wives, and his grandson, Jacob, had four. The law permitted a plurality of wives, yet, like divorce for every cause, it was not *"so in the beginning."* Just as the Genesis record states: *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh"* (with Jesus further adding, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,"* Mt. 19:6), so the implication is clear: one man, one woman (Gen. 2:24). Thus speaks, *"But because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband"* (1 Cor. 7:2).

But, while the phrase *"husband of one wife"* prohibits a polygamist to be an elder, it mandates that the bishop be married. This instructions is one (among many), of the glaring inconsistencies of Catholicism. A bishop needs a wife in his work and God required that he have one. Of course an elder's wife may die after he has been appointed and the question is asked, "What then?" Shall he resign? Some say, *"No, he must have a wife to be appointed, but after such he has proven his qualifications and the death of his wife does not lessen his ability to shepherd the flock."* Perhaps not, but there is a grave doubt.

*"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity: for if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"* (1 Tim. 3:4). Further, Titus 1:6 adds, *"having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly."* For this passages we learn that a "childless man" is not qualified to serve as an elder; neither one whose children are not Christians or who are unruly or accused of riot. A man demonstrates his ability to lead the flock and tend to its needs by the way he has led his own family.

No question is raised more frequently than, must an elder have a plurality of children or "What about a one-child elder?" The plural (children) includes the singular (child). Sarah rejoiced at the birth of Isaac, saying, "*Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck?*" (Gen. 2:7). Sarah gave "*children*" suck, but she one but one child. When Jesus was tested by the Sadducees who asked, "*Teacher, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother*" (Mt. 22:24). Had a man had just one child, the law the Sadducees cited would have had no application. Old teachings "die hard," but sometimes we must give them up because the application we make is contrary to the scriptures. Of course, no one should serve who has debts in regard to his qualifications if he has only one child, nor should one attempt to serve where a congregation unyieldingly believes that an elder must be more than one child. Still, we must learn to prefer truth above all.

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