

God Marriage and Family-Lesson 12: Church Leadership and Concluding Comments

I.) According to the Bible, church leadership positions are contingent upon exemplary marriages and families (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1: 5-6). "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task."

II.) With regard to aspiring church leaders and their wives: A.) Five interpretations of the words *mias gynaikas andra*, generally translated "husband of one wife" or "faithful husband" are given: 1.) A church leader must be a married man. 2.) A church leader must not be a divorcee. 3.) A church leader must not be remarried. 4.) A church leader must not be involved in polygamy. 5.) A church leader must be a faithful husband to the woman to whom he is currently married. B.) Responses are given to each interpretation, respectively: 1.) Paul himself was unmarried and desired that others might also be exercising the gift of singleness for the benefit of the church, so it is unlikely he would have excluded such from church leadership. 2.) If Paul wanted to exclude divorcees from eligibility, he could have used the words "not divorced". 3.) Remarriage is no character flaw since the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul encourages young widows to remarry. So, it does not seem reasonable he would exclude their husbands from church leadership. 4.) Polygamy was not a significant issue in the Greco-Roman world, rather, concubinage would have been more relevant. 5.) Being a faithful husband if married appears to be the best interpretation when understood idiomatically, that is, the church leader is to be a one-wife type of husband or a one-woman type of man. (Note the chart.) C.) Implications: 1.) The Bible tends to caution against the ordination of young and inexperienced men to church leadership offices. 2.) Men and their wives who are not managing their own households well cannot be expected to manage the household of the church which is a far greater task. 3.) In the economy of Jesus Christ, the church is a larger and more important family than an individual's nuclear family. 4.) The attitudes that various denominations have towards the eligibility of divorcees is dependent upon the various views examined in our previous lesson regarding the legitimacy of divorce and remarriage in general. 5.) Leadership positions in the local church are primarily contingent upon a track record of spiritual maturity and proven moral uprightness. 6.) Singleness, in and of itself, is not a disqualifier for church leadership positions, however, issues involving gender are problematic throughout evangelicalism but a discussion of these matters is beyond the scope of this course. Suffice it to say that within the PCA, as a general rule, official church leadership positions, i.e., deacon and ruling or teaching elder, are only open to men.

III.) With regard to the children of aspiring church leaders and their wives, as noted in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul requires that an overseer "must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect" (1 Timothy 3). However, in Titus 1:6, Paul states that a leader's children must be "faithful" or "believers" and "not open to the charge of being wild or disobedient" (NIV). After comparing the two passages with reference to contextual and lexical considerations, our authors conclude that the rendering, "faithful" is better than "believers" in the Titus passage. This interpretation has the advantage of sparing us from controversies regarding the spiritual conditions of pastor's and other church leader's and her kids.

IV.) If time permits, we will return briefly to the doctrine of covenantal succession and address any general or specific questions or comments you may have. I conclude this course with the same sentiment expressed by our authors that God may use what we have covered to contribute to his greater glory and forgive whatever has fallen short of his perfect wisdom. May the Bride of Christ receive ever greater glory through our marriages and families! Amen.