

**Committed to One**  
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*“Pastor, I have committed my life to one thing: pursuing the material things of this world. I earned my first million dollars before I turned thirty. My wife and I live in a multi-million dollar house in a gated community in the nicest area of the city. I buy a brand new sports car each year to add to my collection. Anything that can be bought, you can bet that I’ve owned one of them. I’ve chosen my course, I’ve pursued my goals..., and I have never looked back.”*

If you were witnessing to this man as he told about his life and his choices, what would you do? Would you walk away, feeling that he is beyond salvation because of his choice to pursue material things? After all, didn’t Jesus say that we can only serve one – either wealth, or God (Matthew 6:24)? And there is no doubt that this man has chosen the first one. So would you think that his choosing wealth prevents him from legitimately turning to God?

Well, Jesus certainly didn’t think so. He met people that had chosen wealth (the rich young ruler, probably Zacchaeus), and yet He still gave them the chance to leave their first choice behind and choose God. How could He do that when He said that a person could only choose or serve one? It’s obviously because Jesus meant that a person can only serve one of these *at a time*. And if, like Zacchaeus, the man mentioned above leaves his earlier choice and chooses another option (God and His salvation) he will still be only serving one – a different “one,” but still only one. I’ll get back to this in a moment.

Not long ago I was in a discussion about the qualifications of a certain minister for a lead position in a new ministry. Some of my friends and fellow pastors in this discussion – men that I genuinely love and respect – thought that this minister was unqualified for such a position because he had been divorced. When asked to explain, their objections revolved around only one thing: The Bible’s requirement outline by Paul that the overseer (pastor) be “the husband of one wife” (1Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). These objecting brethren believed that the intentions behind this phrase disqualified all divorced men from having a lead position in a church.

After hearing the reaction from these beloved brethren, I went home and researched this Bible phrase. “The husband of one wife” is the English translation of the Greek words *mias gunaikos andra*. *Andra* is a very common word (over 200 occurrences) in the Greek New Testament, and pretty much speaks of a person that is male. Over 150 times it is translated as a form of “man/men;” and some 50 times it is translated as a form of “husband” (as here). Whether it is translated as “man” or “husband” is solely determined by the context.

*Gunaikos* also has over 200 occurrences, and it is basically the feminine counterpart of *andra*. It is a basic word that simply means “woman” or “wife,” and like *andra* the difference in how it is interpreted is solely determined by the context.

Finally, *mias* simply means “one” or “of one,” referring to quantity, a place, etc.

At this point we must for the moment lay aside our traditions and all previous conclusions and ask ourselves what do these three little Greek words imply. Obviously the two words for man/husband and woman/wife do not in themselves speak of the kind of limitations in question – they only indicate that the phrase refers to a husband-wife issue and doesn’t tell us much more. So, it seems that the whole objection comes down to what the single word “one” is intended to imply.

As we put the three words together (and rearranging them so they makes sense in English), we find that this little phrase translates into, “[a] man of one woman” or “[a] husband of one wife.” Or as one of my Greek instructors cleverly phrased it, he is “a one-woman man.” But does “one” mean an only-one-for-all-times woman/wife, or does it rather refer to a man that is genuinely committed to the one woman that he is with?

This brings me back to my introductory story. Let’s say that after witnessing to that man you happened to bump into him a year later, and he tells you that he has been saved. This man who was serving one thing (material wealth) is still serving something else (God). Are you uncomfortable with that? Has he broken Christ’s declaration that he can’t serve two? Of course not. He is still only serving one thing – even if it is a *different* one thing.

Did you know that Jesus used the same Greek word in Mt 6:24 that Paul used in 1Tim. 3:2? So it only makes sense that if we accept that a man who chooses a different master can still be serving only one master, then we must also accept that a minister that is divorced and married to a different wife can still be only married to one wife – that he can still be “the husband of one wife.” And if the husband of one wife, he is therefore not automatically disqualified by 1Tim. 3:2 from being an overseer/leading-pastor.

Am I saying that divorce never disqualifies a man from a ministry position? No, I am not. A divorce may be an indicator of personal issues that might well prevent a man from holding such a position. But while no one should turn a blind eye to indicators that are there, it seems that the scriptures make it clear that divorce and remarriage does not disqualify a man on the misguided understanding that he is automatically no longer “the husband of one wife.”

The time has come – and is long overdue – for us to take an honest look at the intentions of God’s Word and see if our convictions truly match them. Do we depend more on what some genuine-but-possibly-mistaken person has taught us down through the years than we do on what an honest study of His Word clearly shows? Are we dangerously close to following in the footsteps of the Pharisees who relied and made demands based upon their own traditions and never stopped to really notice that they did not truly reflect God’s intentions?

In closing I ask you to ponder this: The God that says that we can only commit ourselves to *one* thing – does He allow us to change that commitment from *one* thing to another *one*? If no, then it’s time to put our evangelism on the shelf and let it collect dust, for there would be no chance for change for mankind that is already committed to sin. But if yes, then it seems that we must now reconsider any misconstrued ideas of what “husband of *one* wife” does – and what it *does not* – rule out.