

SOUND WORKERS IN THE CHURCH

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed and read the Bible for this lesson to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes. When you follow this procedure you will be a better teacher of your students.

Lesson Aim: Know the credentials that God has given for pastors and deacons; follow them carefully.

Suggestion: This lesson will call attention to important truths in this week's lesson. After the lesson, give your class next week's Student Lesson so they can share their answers in class next week.

Introduction: Jesus told His disciples, "I will build My church" (Mt 16:18) and He began to build it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" in this dispensation of grace (1 Tim 3:15). Therefore, it is important that qualified men are chosen to lead the churches in the work that God wants them to do. "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim 5:22a).

Why are there different names in the Bible for a pastor? 3:1

There are five names for a pastor and each one tells of a different aspect of his ministry. In 1 Tim 3:1 the pastor is called a "bishop." The word simply means "overseer"; a pastor oversees the work of a local church. There is no office of a bishop over the pastor in the Bible. Peter used three words referring to the pastor (1 Pet 1-2). He told them, "Feed the flock." A shepherd fed a flock in the pasture, hence the name, "pastor." A pastor feeds believers from the Bible. Peter also used "elders" for pastors who were older, mature men in the faith. They were to take "oversight" (bishop) of the flock. A pastor also was a "teacher" of the doctrines Jesus taught His disciples (Eph 4:11; Mt 28:20) and a "preacher" of the Word and of the gospel revealed in the Word (2 Tim 4:2; Rom 10:14-15).

How can a pastor be blameless? 3:2

This does not mean he is sinless, even though he tries to live a godly life. But no person is perfect, not even a pastor. So when he sins, he confesses his sin to God to be forgiven and goes to the person he sinned against and makes it right. In this way he has a blameless testimony.

Can a divorced man be a pastor or a deacon, if he is to be the husband of one wife? 3:2, 12

There are many views regarding this requirement of a pastor. (1) A pastor or deacon must be married. This does not seem to be the proper meaning since it says "one" wife instead of "a" wife. (2) A pastor or deacon cannot be polygamous. However, no believer was to have more than one wife. Also, polygamy was forbidden in the Roman Empire at that time. Therefore, this interpretation has problems. (3) A pastor or deacon cannot remarry if his wife dies, because then he would have two wives. In other Scriptures, however, a partner was free to remarry if the other died (cf. Rom 7:2-3; 1 Tim 5:14). (4) It is commonly held in fundamental churches that a pastor or a deacon cannot be divorced and remarried to hold either of these offices. So is this interpretation correct or are there some flaws in it that need to be corrected? First, we must ask ourselves, "Did Christ cleanse us from most of our sins when we were saved, or all of them?" What does the Bible say that God does with our sins? (Isa 38:17; 43:25; Mi 7:19). Second, did not Saul persecute Jesus when he imprisoned and killed believers (Act 9:4-5)? Is divorce worse than killing believers? Saul (Paul) said he was the chief of sinners (1 Tim 1:15), yet Jesus made him an apostle to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, because he lived a godly life after he was saved. Third, does the Scripture say we are a new creation in Christ or an old sinner that has been patched up well enough to go to Heaven, but not well enough to be a pastor or a deacon (2 Cor 5:17)? Fourth, are teachers in the church held to the same standard regarding divorce as deacons? They usually have more influence on members of the church than deacons, yet the Scriptures are silent on this matter. We know that divorce is not God's plan for anyone, but unbelievers are rebellious toward God and His laws until they are saved. When they are saved, a new life begins for them. If they live a godly life over a period of two or three years to prove themselves faithful to the Lord, it seems reasonable to let them be a pastor or a deacon. Those who get divorced after they are saved should be content to serve the Lord in some other capacity in the church.