

Difficult phrase position paper

Religion



POSITION PAPER THE MEANING OF “ THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” IN

TIMOTHY 3: 2 INTRODUCTION It is importance to interpret the phrase “ husband of one wife” in 1 Timothy 3: 2 correctly because it is of great concern to Paul as it is one of the important qualities necessary for church leadership and in both Titus and Timothy letters.(1 Timothy 3: 2, 12; Titus 1: 6). it is also important to interpret the phrase correctly as it greatly impacts on the lives of Christians because most of the peoples marriages even non-Christians end in divorce, the phrase guides divorced individuals identify their role in church leadership. The phrase also guides Christians who overreact on the cases of immorality by interpreting the phrase their own way making it say more than what it was originally intended to say.

The different understandings of the phrase are as follows:

This position paper is intended to explore some of the main interpretations of the phrase “ husband of one wife” as found in 1 Timothy 3: 2 and the weaknesses and strengths of each argument.

Marriage is mandatory

A number of commentators who have written about 1 Timothy 3: 2 have concluded that the phrase means that it is not a must for an elder to be married. They contend that the phrase simply tries to say that if a man is married, then he should be faithful to his spouse and exhibit marital fidelity and not be polygamous, a man of many women. The reason why marriage is not a must for one to be a church leader is argued from Paul’s point of view. Paul was neither married nor did he have children so he would not insert a qualification that would exclude him. It is noted that Paul spoke of the advantages of his own single state in 1 Corinthians 7: 8, Paul expresses that celibacy is the most optimal state in which an individual is able to serve the

<https://assignbuster.com/difficult-phrase-position-paper/>

Lord. The main idea here is that a man does not qualify as a husband of one wife because he has no wife, to be a man of one wife one has to have a wife. Personally the marriage view should be eliminated as it places an undue emphasis on a candidate's married status while the text is more concerned with on a person's character. The marriage issue lacks enough scholarly support its claims.

Marriage to the church

This first understanding as meaning married to the church simply communicates that a man must be completely dedicated to the work of the church in order to qualify as an elder. In this view, the word wife is seen as the church or wife of Christ. In Eph 5: 23) the church is alluded to as Christ's bride. In Lange's commentary Oosterzee refers to this position though it is often doubted because of his Roman Catholic origin. According to Kent, the view was an obvious endeavour to protect the Romish doctrine of celibacy for the priests. Being married to the church makes it irrelevant to marry a literal wife. Thus 1 Timothy 3: 2 cannot be used to make the priests get married. The view was also suspected to rely on a dual hermeneutic because the phrase " husband of one wife) was given a spiritual interpretation while the rest of the text was literally interpreted.

Marriage should only happen once: widower cannot marry

The view of this interpretation disqualifies all those individuals who have remarried from elderly positions. The logic of this view says that a man who remarries after the death of his first wife ceases to qualify for an eldership as the act of remarrying makes him the husband of two. The pure ideal of marriage is destroyed once an elder marries, second marriages are considered inappropriate for elders as they damage the portrait between

<https://assignbuster.com/difficult-phrase-position-paper/>

Christ and His church damaging the union of one flesh.

Despite the advantages of the one wife for a lifetime view, it is accompanied by a series of difficulties. If Paul's intentions were to indicate getting married only once was the main qualification for being an elder he would have simply said "having been married only once". Paul's texts was contradicting as elsewhere he indicates that after the death of a spouse the marriage bond is broken thus allowing the surviving spouse to form another bond in the form remarrying(Rom 7: 2-4; Cor 7: 39).

Monogamy

This perspective interprets 1 Timothy 3: 2 as a means to disqualify men from eldership who are married to more than one man. Such restrictions immediately disqualify polygamists and bigamists. The main view to the interpretation is that a man who is married to multiple partners is definitely not a husband of one wife but a husband of many wives. This view is advocated by Hiebert and Robertson. One of the arguments that favour the view is that "all the other qualifications listed by Paul refer to a man's present status not the status of his past life." We also find out that Chrysostom interpreted 1 Timothy 3: 2 as the prohibition against polygamy. The view suffers a number of weaknesses for instance when issuing a prohibition against any form of polygamy for church elders seem redundant as a man was not allowed to be even a church member if he was a man with many partners let alone be a leader.

Moral husband

The view strictly disqualifies any man who has been unfaithful to his wife to continue being an elder. A man had to have positive characteristics of fidelity if he was married. This view deals with the person's characters. This moral

<https://assignbuster.com/difficult-phrase-position-paper/>

husband view has its criticism as they claim that Paul could have just said a man had to be faithful to one wife to be an elder.

Conclusion

In conclusion this position paper has viewed various interpretations of the phrase “ husband of one wife” found in 1 Timothy 3: 2 and conclude that the best interpretation is to translate the phrase to “ a one woman man” and view the phrase as requiring fidelity and character of a candidate for eldership. The phrase does not directly deal with the legal married status of the candidate but rather faithfulness and fidelity as part of the individual’s character at the time he is considered for office. It is important for the church not to use 1 Timothy 3: 2 as a basis to hold individual past sins against him in isolating his present character. The church can maintain balance in this part by following Paul’s intentions behind 1 Timothy 3: 2 instead of adding what Paul said even for the purpose of maintaining high standards for church leadership.

References

Calvin, John. “ Commentaries on the First Epistle to Timothy” In Calvin’s commentaries. 22 volumes. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.

Chrysostom, John. The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, on the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Translated by James Tweed. Oxford: J. Parker, 1843.