

2026
Believe
What's Greater

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

Isaiah 53:1-2 (NKJV)



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Bible Study Lesson: **“Can someone who has been divorced serve as a Deacon?”**

A Biblical Study of the Deacon's Role in the Local Church

Primary Text: Timothy 3:8-13

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The Core Text

The key passage is **First Epistle to Timothy 3:8–13**, especially verse 12:

“Let deacons be the husband of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.”

The debated phrase is:

μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρες

Literally: “*a one-woman man.*”



What Does “Husband of One Wife” Mean?

There are three primary interpretations historically held in the church:

#1 The Strict View (Never Divorced)

This view teaches:

- A deacon must never have been divorced.
- "Husband of one wife "means one marriage for life.

Strengths

- Upholds a high view of marriage.
- Simple and clear standard.

Challenges

- Does not distinguish between:
 - Divorce before salvation
 - Biblical vs. unbiblical divorce
 - Abandonment or abuse situations
- May conflict with the New Testament emphasis on redemption.

#2 The Moral Faithfulness View (Most Common Today)

This view understands the phrase to mean:

A deacon must be morally faithful and devoted to one spouse.

The emphasis is on:

- Present character
- Sexual faithfulness
- Covenant loyalty

Under this interpretation:

- Divorce does not automatically disqualify.
- What matters is whether the person is faithful and above reproach now.

This aligns with:

- Acts 6 (focus on reputation and spiritual maturity)
- The overall New Testament emphasis on transformed life.



#3 The Redemption & Circumstances View

This view considers:

- When the divorce occurred (before or after conversion)
- Whether it was on biblical grounds (Matthew 19:9; abandonment in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16)
- Whether there has been repentance and restoration

This approach holds both:

- The sanctity of marriage
- The power of grace



Acts 6 and the Original Pattern

In **Acts of the Apostles 6:1–7**, the qualifications focus on:

- Good reputation
- Full of the Spirit
- Wisdom

Marital history is not mentioned there.

That suggests:

The earliest emphasis for deacons was spiritual character and public credibility.



Key Biblical Principle

Leadership qualifications in the New Testament emphasize:

- Being “above reproach”
- Faithfulness
- Stability in the home
- Spiritual maturity

They do **not** require:

- A perfect past



If divorce permanently disqualified a believer from service, it would raise serious questions about:

- Grace
- Restoration
- New creation theology (2 Corinthians 5:17)

How Churches Wisely Apply This?

Healthy churches typically ask:

1. What were the circumstances of the divorce?
2. Was there biblical cause?
3. Has there been repentance where necessary?
4. Is the person faithful and stable now?
5. Does their life strengthen or strain the church's witness?

Balanced Teaching Statement

Divorce alone does not automatically disqualify a person from serving as a deacon. The New Testament emphasizes present faithfulness, spiritual maturity, and reputation. Each situation requires prayerful discernment, biblical wisdom, and pastoral oversight.



Final Word

Some churches will conclude:

- “We restrict deacon service to those never divorced.”

Others will conclude:

- “We allow divorced individuals to serve if they meet biblical qualifications and demonstrate present faithfulness.”