

# **PASTORS' PERNICIOUS POLICY**

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Perhaps one of the more insidious practices plaguing the people of God today is the implementation of a policy by the pastors of some local congregations to treat adultery as a private sin beyond their supervisory responsibility. (The premise on which this article is built emerges from years of prayerful observation of local congregations. The motivations for writing grow from responsibilities enjoined in Ephesians 4:15; Acts 20:26-27; and Ezekiel 3:18-20, 33:6-8.) Specifically, the overseers of some local congregations accept unscripturally married couples without question as to marital status.

What constitutes a scriptural marriage? One, a couple (of the opposite sex, Matt. 19:4-5) who have never been married may marry (I Tim. 5:14; Heb. 13:4). Presupposed is abiding love for each other and the maturity the relationship requires (Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:4; Matt. 19:10-12). Two, a person who has put away a former marriage partner who was guilty of adultery, i.e., “unlawful sexual intercourse,” who is innocent of such behavior and who has not contributed to his or her partner’s infidelity through calloused violation of the divine directives for married people in I Corinthians 7:1-5 may marry an eligible person (cf. also Matt. 19:9). Presupposed is manifestation of Christian character in areas like courtesy, consideration, and communication befitting the gospel of Christ. It would be fanciful to consider someone “innocent” who flagrantly violated Christ’s commands for Christian deportment and whose obnoxious behavior drove the mate away (Col. 4:6). Three, a person who has a deceased spouse may remarry an eligible person (Rom. 7:1-3; cf. also I Cor. 7:39). Many, many years of prayer, thought, and reflection have gone into the next statement. All other relationships commonly called “marriage” are unscriptural.

The guilty pastors need to consider at least the following three dangers that grow out of their pernicious policy. One, the minimization of the faith of the congregation under their charge occurs when any sin is overlooked and ignored. The Devil is given a foothold in the congregation. The elders are guilty of playing favorites with people and sin. Adultery with a license from the courthouse cleans the sin up like a teenage couple dressed to kill on prom night that discards devotion to sexual purity.

Two, the minimization of fellowship with other congregations who know unscripturally married couples who have secured safe harbor is devastating to the area efforts to reach the lost with the gospel of Christ. Have Amos 3:3 and Ephesians 5:11 been forgotten? One commandment of God cannot be set-aside without damaging the whole wharf and woof of the garment of Christianity (Jas. 2:10).

Three, the minimization of the whole point of having elders or pastors in the first place is missed when the men given a divine charge refuse to courageously and faithfully perform their duty (cf. Ezek. 34:1-31).

In closing, remember I Corinthians 6:9-11, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”