

Selection of Elders: Could a man having one Child be appointed?

Summary Essay of Discussions on MOG Platform, Nigeria (Feb, 2018)

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Introduction

The Men of God Preaching the Gospel (MOG) is a **WhatsApp** Group for Preachers and Teachers of churches of Christ domiciled mostly in Nigeria. For about two weeks in mid-February the topic of discussion was: “**Does the scripture permit the ordination of a man with one child as an Elder in the church?**” (Assuming that all other divine criteria are met by the man under consideration). Initially, opinions were divided over the topic but as brothers reasoned out the scriptures, the truth was established in a convincing manner. Eventually few of those averring ‘*No*’ and some of those sitting on the fence conceded the argument, recounted their positions and requested that this article be produced to serve as a useful reference tool for core study. We thank God for the diverse points, logical reasoning and textual studies contributed by both sides during the parley. The weight of the scriptural evidence is too much to be resisted by those who truly comprehend the passages, facts, implications and questions that were addressed without evasion. Rather than list verbatim the full exchanges showing ‘*who stated what,*’ **this treatise shows in a concise manner why the answer is ‘YES’!** It addresses the main points of those who object and establishes how the man under consideration is contemplated and included in the injunctions relating to children. Thus the ideas here are not mine alone but include several others’.

The criteria for would-be Elders and Deacons are spelt out in scripture:

Titus 1:5 *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*

6 *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*

7 *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*

8 *But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;*

9 *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

1 **Timothy 3:1** *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

2 *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;*

3 *Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;*

4 *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;*

5 *(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)*

6 *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

7 *Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

8 *Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;*

9 *Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*

10 *And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.*

11 *Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.*

12 *Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*

13 *For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

Most pages are in two columns; Essay on the left & Scripture/Greek/Note on the right for easy look up.

Use of the term ‘Children’ in most Languages

The word ‘child’ refers to an offspring of a man or woman known as the parent(s), it is a generic word for a boy/son or girl/daughter, usually used of one who is yet to mature or who is dependent on or is being compared relative to the parent. Its plural is ‘children.’ Ordinarily, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, use of the word ‘children’ envisages and admits a lone child (as in Mt 19:29, 1 Cor 7:14) when an arbitrary parent is referenced.

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrews while the New Testament was written in Koine Greek (the common language of the ordinary people of the civilized world in the time of the apostles). We shall see how the words child/children were used from the patriarchal age to the gospel era, even till now.

The plural term ‘children’ **on rare occasions** may connote the singular (child) when a known parent is under consideration, which is an exception to the rule that quantity be the focus in such a situation. We thus have to examine the context in order to correctly interpret any passage.

For example, in Mt 2:16-18 and 2 Jn 1:1, 4, 12-13 it is implied that more than one child of each KNOWN woman was being discussed given the historical facts. However, in Gen 21:7 Sarah idiomatically referred to Isaac, her only son whom she breastfed as "children." [Note that it was earlier recorded that because she had *no children* she gave her handmaid to Abraham so that she may *obtain children* by Hagar in Gen 16:1-2. We know being childless prompted Sarah's action and she did obtain one via Hagar. The two women were at loggerheads by then and it is inconceivable that Sarah breastfed Ishmael.]

Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a **child** in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

Psalms 127:3 *Lo, **children** are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*

Matthew 19:29 *And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or **children**, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

1 Corinthians 7:14 *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your **children** unclean; but now are they holy.*

Matthew 2:16 *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her **children**, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

2 John 1:1 *The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; ...*

4 *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.*

12 *Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.*

13 *The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.*

Genesis 21:7 *And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given **children** suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.*

[Hebrews 1:2 *“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds...*

6 *And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” -This Heb quotation is important for page 7.]*

Inspiration refers to lone Sheshan as "sons" and also to his one daughter as "children" in 1 Chro 2:31, 34-35, to keep with the flow of language used within the chapter. That is the same way someone who has an only child today, in claiming a Biblical promise, keep to the tone of scripture to declare: "*Behold I and the children which God hath given me (are for signs and wonders)*" -Heb 2:13, Isa 8:18a.

In specially understood expressions within most cultures, occasionally the word 'child' may connote one or more, such as in the phrase '**a woman with child**' which is used to describe a pregnant woman **irrespective of the number of fetuses she carries in her womb** –Mt 24:19, 1 Thess 5:3 (Recall that medical scans to ascertain the number of forthcoming babies is a recent technology).

The associated Greek words for child/ren in the NT

SINGULAR

Teknon=	nominative singular.	Subject
Teknon=	accusative singular.	Dir. Object
Teknou=	genitive singular.	Possessive
Teknw/teknoo=	dative singular.	Indirect object

PLURAL

Tekna=	nominative.	Ditto
Tekna=	accusative (1Tim. 3. 4; Tit. 1. 6).	"
Teknwn=	genitive (1Tim. 3. 12).	"

Example of usages: The child (teknon *subject*) of Oboroh gave child (teknon *direct object*) of Leslie to give children (teknois, *indirect object*) of Ibanga.

Elders are to have Tekna. Deacons are to have tekwn/teknoon (long "ô") which literally means "children." It is different from teknon (short "ô") which literally means "child."

1 Chronicles 2: 29 *And the name of the wife of Abishur was Abihail, and she bare him Ahban, and Molid.* 30 *And the sons of Nadab; Seled, and Appaim: but Seled died without children.* 31 *And the sons of Appaim; Ishi. And the sons of Ishi; Sheshan. And the **children** of Sheshan; Ahlai...* 34 *Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. And Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha.* 35 *And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife; and she bare him Attai.*

Matthew 24:19 *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!* [Calamitous time for those pregnant with or nursing one or more babies]

1 Thessalonians 5:3 *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* [... as labor pains beset a pregnant woman about to deliver baby/babies]

See **Lexicon/Concordance entries** at http://biblehub.com/greek/tekna_5043.htm, http://biblehub.com/greek/teknon_5043.htm, http://biblehub.com/greek/tekno_n_5043.htm

Between Teknon/τέκνον (nominative or accusative singular) and teknon/τέκνων (genitive plural). Though both words appear the same (as teknon) when transliterated, they are different in translation and meaning. Teknon (τέκνων) wherever it appears is ALWAYS plural and can only be literally translated so. Tekna/tekwn are plurals of teknon and can't be translated as child, but can *admit* child WHENEVER QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY, IS THE FOCUS.

Whenever something is *required* of children, it can, and ALWAYS do, apply to a child as well. That's how requirements are written in scriptures.

When something (qualitative) is required of the members of a group, the Plural is used to include the Singular. To be "forsaken" and being "holy" are the things required of one's offspring in Mt 19:29 and 1 Cor 7:14 respectively, so the plural term 'Tekna' used is applicable even unto a man or a couple that has just one child.

On the other hand when quantity is the focus in plain, non-idiomatic language, a Plural form is used and may not admit the Singular within that context.

Example: John not only knew the elect lady personally as implied in vs 1 & 12 of 2 Jn 1, he wrote: "I found of thy children (Tekna) walking in truth." This connotes that one or more of her children walk in truth, not all of them! It is plausible she had child/ren that duly practiced the faith as well as minors/others who were yet to do so.

The use of Tekna (plural) and of Teknon (plural) in 1 Tim 3:4, 12

Those who assert that an elder must have two or more children insist that the Holy Spirit made a deliberate choice of words in these two verses “so as to allow the deacon to have one or more children and “to simultaneously restrict the elder to have more than one.” That could be presumptuous! The Spirit inspired the writers to convey information and each writer has his own style of passing such across. The form of Teknon used in vs 12 is the Plural form and differs from the Singular form in Greek. Thus Paul used two different plural words in the Greek for "children" in this passage. Why? He simply shifted from children being the object of “it behooves”, the only finite verb in the sentence, to being possession of deacons. Note that Matthew used Tekna for children in 22:24 while Mark used Teknon for same in 12:19, when each inspired writer is reporting the same thing! It concerned a man who died leaving no children, which means he died leaving NO CHILD (Deut 25:5) NOT that he was probably survived by one child. From historically times till date, socially and grammatically, anyone who has children has one or more, those who do not have children are those who do not have any.

Plurality encompass singularity in Titus

It is argued by some that "having faithful children" (Tit 1:6) necessarily requires the man must have plurality of two or more children, that having one child is excluded. **Is the singular not encompassed by the plural?** For consistency, those who make that argument ought to also contend that the aspiring candidate or serving elder **must not**:

1. Be a lover of a good **man**. (from Tit 1:8)

2. Convince a **gainsayer** (from Tit 1:9)

If they can see that the man is allowed to be a lover of a good man or of the good men he encounters, that he is to convince a gainsayer or the gainsayers (that he comes across -whether singular or plural) how come they fail to see he is to have a FAITHFUL "child or children" whichever the number God blessed him with?

1 Tim 3:4 *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;*

12 *Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*

Matthew 22:24 *Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having **no children**, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.*

Mark 12:19 *Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave **no children**, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.*

Deuteronomy 25:5 *If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have **no child**, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.*

Titus 1:5 *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*

6 *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*

7 *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*

8 *But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;*

9 *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

Since one must be "*the husband of one wife & of good behaviour & apt to teach & having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly & not covetous & ruleth well his own house & having his children in subjection with all gravity &...*" to qualify and remain on the job THEN it is logically implied that he that is "*not the husband of one wife or of bad behaviour or not apt to teach or having unfaithful children; accused of riot, unruly or covetous or ruleth awfully his own house or not having his children in subjection; with all laxity or...*" does not qualify to be appointed, such becomes disqualified if he was already serving.

Interesting, those who argue that "having faithful children" as qualifier requires "**two or more faithful children**" are **inconsistent** because they use "**having at least one unfaithful child**" as a disqualifier; rather than "**having two or more unfaithful children**." They do NOT wait for a serving (or aspiring) elder to have a plurality of unruly children before they request such man to step down but adopt **our** definition of children.

[*Whether a man should step down depends on scope of unruliness, his (non/mis)rule, etc. Compare Eli to Samuel -1 Sam 2:12-25; 3:18; 8:1-3*]

Having faithful children and ruling the house well are two different criteria that should not be conflated or mixed up.

Unsuccessful attempt to dodge the exposed inconsistency

When the conflation and inconsistency on their part is pointed out, our brothers deflect. They do realize that they have jettisoned their earlier literal rendering or meaning of 'children,' initially applied as "more than one child." Hence they will quickly abandon the argument on numbers and begin to claim that the waywardness of one child implies that the man is not ruling his house well. That is an inference but it **actually damages** their position further! Why? Simply because aside sidetracking from making one child represent children, they now proceed to make that lone child represent the entire house (which comprises the man, his wife, all the children and any servants/relations staying thereat). Such inference is not always necessary, it is also untenable when the children have grown up and left the man's rule as independent adults to establish their own homes. By then, those not watchful could fall -1 Cor 10:12.

Practical illustration of the two positions being discussed....

In a congregation about to ordain elders, say three men are being considered who desire the office, are apt to teach, hospitable, etc.

Bro. A has two faithful children, Bro. B has one faithful child while Bro. C has three faithful children but one just turned unruly and is now pregnant outside of wedlock.

Our view is that A & B may be ordained as qualified.

Objecting brothers say B does not have 'children' and cannot be appointed since the scriptures literally require him "having children under subjection" not 'child under subjection.'

We therefore aver that following their reasoning, A and C should be ordained as qualified. Why? Because C has "faithful children," he does **not have** 'unfaithful/unruly children' since only one child is riotous in his home. The word "children" must retain its literal meaning for consistency. Since objectors insist children must only refer to "two or more offspring," and will not accept B because he has one faithful child THEN they can't reject C because he has only one unfaithful child too. They need C to have a plurality of *children* that are unruly/riotous for them to disqualify him and be seen as standing by the Bible text in a uniform manner.

We aver the man's children (that is the vast majority of them or an only child) are required to be faithful whether as youths at home or as adults who have moved out. It is even when independent that their faithfulness can be seen to be genuine and non-compelled, indicating they retained the good upbringing by a God-fearing father. If they should be riotous or unruly as adults it rubs negatively on their father and his influence at any time. The perception of the congregation and society is to associate the children's behavioural outlook with him whether scandalous or righteous. Most of the man's children ought to be reliable anytime; not just as 'morally good unsaved persons' or as 'wanton believers' but as 'committed saints.' The **child/ren's faithfulness** remains a testimonial of his family irrespective of whether he is **ruling such or not** at any stage of life. **Thus the two criteria are distinct, not equivalent.**

A father may rule the house well yet have faithful children who are (rightly or wrongly) accused of riot e.g. Job wasn't sure if his children had sinned and Samson was riotous though his father raised him well.

Absurdity of fixation on Singular/Plural pairing

1 Tim 3:4 says "...*having his children in subjection...*"

Some perceive the instruction that 'having "his" (Singular) "children" (Plural) in subjection' connote that the man may not have just one child. They have forgotten that each father, not only an elder ought to have his offspring, whether one or more, in subjection. They contend that the use of Tekna dictate that only two or more children are contemplated for a bishop. Let us apply their logic to another verse in same chapter.

1 Tim 3:12 *Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*

Are deacons (Plural) to be the husbands (Plural), **collectively** married to the same one wife (Singular)?

Our brothers have always argued we should stick to chapter context and not go to other passages (such as Mt 19:29) in discussing what 'children' refers to in 1 Tim 3.

Will they also be willing to stick to the context of 1Tim 3 on deacons and not go to Mt 19, 1 Cor 7, etc. or even the command that an elder be the husband of one wife?

Literally, verse 8, 11 says "*Likewise the deacons grave... even so wives be grave...*" while verse 12b says "*ruling children and their own houses well.*" Wives in 11 refer to spouses of elders and/or of deacons.

Nothing in verses 8-11 suggests a deacon is limited to only ONE wife since double plural permits one to one and one to many relationships. But given the wording in **12a**, those who will not allow the Plural to cover the Singular, are **contextually** CONSTRAINED to require at least "*two or more deacons*" if not ALL the deacons, to be husbands to one wife; sharing just one woman! Such a scenario does not prevent the deacons from "ruling their houses and children well" since two or more houses (family of each deacon) are co-located in a single home.

If a well-ruled teenage daughter gets pregnant, people would ordinarily accuse her of being unruly. Would they still do that if they got to know she was faithful and under subjection but got raped by armed robbers?

If God wanted to demand plurality of children aside the quality of upbringing imparted by the father, He could have stated in 1 Tim 3:4 & Tit 1:6 thus: "...*He must have several children and have them under subjection...*" & "...*having many faithful children not accused of riot or unruly...*" Such construction cannot be misconstrued or misinterpreted to admit a man having one child. Since the man is the object of interest the inspired writer used expressions that highlight the man's capability to rule child(ren) and not necessarily the quantum of the children.

Once anyone discountenance normal use of language and forgoes proper reasoning on a passage, such will end up with absurd conclusions. Superficial perusal of 1 Tim 3:12 will result in an inference which imposes polyandry!

The claim that a passage be interpreted in isolation is neither sound nor scriptural. Every verse ought to be considered in its immediate and remote context since passages of scripture are harmonious and shed light on one another.

'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation... All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' -2 Peter 1:20, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Inspired Paul used that construction –'husbands' (plural males) of 'one wife,' partly to exclude polygamy since polyandry was already considered adultery -Rm 7:2-3. Our overall knowledge of the theme of marriage from the scriptures show 1 Tim 3:12 is to communicate that each deacon is to be married to one distinct or different wife and each should rule well his one or more children in his own personal house.

"Children" used of 'any widow' to be considered for church support

The same Greek word is used for 'children' about **anyone** who desires to be a bishop and for **any widow** to be cared for by her offspring in 1 Tim 3:4 & 5:4. Those who insist on plurality of children for an elder do not make the same contention concerning the widow. Why? They cite 'Plurals of class' rule and allege 1 Tim 3:8 is about 'one child.' However, their reasoning is faulty! Let us examine the passage:

Verse 3 says 'honor widows indeed.'

If a congregation has just one such widow, is she to be honored?

Verse 4 says if an arbitrary widow has children such offspring should take care of the woman. Individuals are to take care of their aged parents including a widow mother or grandmother. [Note the instruction that "children requite their parents," -though the widow is the immediate focus, God hereby includes the widower or even both living aged parents by using Plural]. Thus if a widow has children the charge to care for her applies to them else it applies to a church.

Verse 5 shows that a true, desolate widow has no one that can take care of her except God -due to barrenness, her children being minors or dead, etc. If she has one offspring that could support her, she is not desolate.

Verse 8 says if ANY provide not for his own family such is worse than an unbeliever. **Though it is generic**, the immediate reference relates to the widow; if any of her offspring (who is able to) fails to care for her, such is ungodly. None of those children is exempted from the responsibility. "**Any**" in 8 refers to each of "**them**" in 4. It is about the necessity of grown children (adults) providing for their family.

Verse 16 says if ANY wo/man (Singular) has widows (Plural) such should care for THEM that the church be not burdened.

Does this command exclude someone that has just one widow?

"Widows" is a plural of class in this passage. God gives charge to s/he that has only 'one' widow AND also to any having 'two or more widows' (e.g. mother, grandmother). Already implied in verse 4 which charge "children (every grown offspring) to requite their parents (those who gave birth to them)" and verse 8 which requires "any (whoever has dependents) to provide for those (one or more) of his own house."

1 Timothy 5

3 Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day... 8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel... 16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Plurals of class involve the plural form being used when it can have a singular application, as well as the plural in a context.

For example in Heb 1:2 the term 'worlds' is a plural yet verse 6 mentions 'the world.' Christ made the worlds (spiritual and material universe including all creatures, planets, stars, etc.-Col 1:15-17), He made the world -Jn 1:10 and ages -Rev 1:8, Eph 3:21. Thus the term *worlds* in Heb 1:2 is a plural of class since it can have both plural and singular applications there.

Our brothers claim that the 'children' of a widow (1 Tim 3:4) is a plural of class but cannot prove that assertion! Please note that no verse within the chapter refers to 'her child' or uses the singular 'Teknon.' Verse 8 contextually links to verse 4 not to a case of 'one child.' **Hence our brothers ought to contend that a widow must have 'two or more children' (as per 1 Tim 3:4) before her offspring could care for her!** Otherwise they should concede that a widow may be cared for by at least one lone child without the church being involved. A minister must verify that before a truly desolate widow qualifies for church support, she is at least 60 years old and was married to just one man. "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." -1 Tim 5:10 Note that God's emphasis is 'should the woman have raised child/ren, the quality of good upbringing she imparted must be evident'; He is not demanding that the widow must have raised a plurality of children.

"Children" used of 'any man who desires to be a bishop'

Paul implied in Titus 1:6 that faithful children are not riotous: if **any** is unruly that is a blemish on the father. The emphasis in 1 Tim 3 is similar to that of 1 Tim 5. *Just as the focus was on the care given by a widow's child(ren) and on the upbringing she might have impacted into such, here the focus is on the competence of a man in ruling and maintaining discipline over his child(ren).* In each case, it is about the quality of the kid/s (whether biological or adopted), NOT quantity.

It is admitted by many who object to ordaining a man with one child that inherently the grammar of 1 Tim 3:4 permits the candidate to have one or more children. They confess that their primary reason for objecting is based on the **opinion or belief** that such a man is not sufficiently experienced to rule the church which contains a plurality of members. They assert that "raising one child doesn't mean you can handle variety of children." However, some claim that if Paul wanted to indicate 'two or more' children, there is no other way he could have expressed it in Greek than using 'Tekna.'

Sadly, the objectors make the ***fallacy*** of equating ruling children with ruling the church, whereas ***the analogy the Holy Spirit used is*** that **He compared ruling the house to ruling the church** in 1 Tim 3:5. Administering the church is not compared to merely ruling children for the household of God consists of adults, youths and little child/ren (since there would be other officers and members that a newly appointed elder would oversee). Thus successful household management is what matters not the procreative prowess or population of kids raised by a candidate.

Some fathers fail at raising one or more kids just as others succeed at raising one or more children. **God has never stipulated the number of offspring a couple must have but He enjoins every parent to make a success of raising each child.** God would have specified two or more children if that is compulsory for a man to become an elder. After all, God specified that the man must be the husband of **one** wife.

1 Timothy 3

1. *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.* 2 ***A bishop then must be...*** 4 ***One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;*** 5 ***(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)***

Identifying the ***correct analogy*** which the Holy Spirit used relative to ruling the church is IMPORTANT. Having non-riotous child/ren who are well-behaved is ***just one of the evidences*** that a man is ruling his house well. Other evidences include how he manages himself, treat and relate with his wife and how she behaves in the community, how he handles any servants or family relations living with him (Col 3:18,21, 1 Pet 3:7, Eph 5:28-29; 6:9), how he provides for his household (1Tim 5:8), whether these folks live peaceably with neighbours (Rm 12:18), etc. ***Thus ruling child/ren is a *lower function* entailing fewer tasks and yielding less experience than ruling the house, for the child(ren) constitute a subset or fraction of the house.***

God could be exact on number stipulation if He wants to -Exo 30:15, Gen 6:15, Josh 6:3-4, Acts 10:19. When God wanted a range of persons within two numbers, He specified both the lower and upper limits -1 Cor 14:27, 29. Whenever He wanted to give a rough estimate of quantity, He approximated around a number -Josh 3:4, Acts 2:41. Yet God prohibited accepting the testimony of only one person and commands that there must be "two or three" or even a cloud/multitude of witnesses -Num 35:40, Deut 17:6; 19:15, Jn 8:17, 2 Cor 13:1, 1 Tim 5:19, Heb 12:1. The Lord clearly states that the church is not one member but many; where at least two or three are gathered together in His name -Mt 18:16, 20, 1 Cor 12:14. Thus if God really wanted a man to have a plurality of kids before such may serve as an elder, God would have **expressly required** "two or more children" and explicitly prohibited someone with just one child.

Other responses we provided to their other queries

Why did God bother to seek a man with a child to be an elder?

Ans: God wants a man who has demonstrated ability to 'govern well his house or family' -1Tim 3:5 (since the church is also a household and spiritual family). Recall that a typical or full human family consists of a husband, wife and child/ren. God also want elders to serve "as examples to the flock" in all ways; both socially and spiritually -1 Pet 5:2. Thus the man with a model/ideal and godly home is to be a shepherd. An overseer is to serve as example even unto outsiders who should give **good** report concerning him (1 Tim 3:7). Thus the post, qualifications and person of a bishop is a motivation to all conscientious persons to pursue godliness, to marry and raise godly child/ren. This is for the benefit of the church in particular and the society in general.

Is house-help not a sufficient factor to prove that the man is a capable manager of his home?

Ans: Not really. Not everyone had or will have house-help. God knew that slavery would fizzle out as people imbibe gospel principles, even as house-help/servitude is even fizzling out now with civilization and human rights legislation. Such servants do not necessarily abide in a home for long compared to a child raised therein (*and who remains an offspring forever*) -Jn 8:35. Besides, God knows several people may live with a man such as relations or servants, etc. aside the wife and child/ren hence God captures the candidate's associative influence on all these people by saying the man must be 'one that ruleth well his own house.'

What experience will a single child add to the managerial skill of a man who is expected to be a non novice?

Ans: Standard child-raising experience! After all, the man is expected to raise whatever number of kids he has with SAME godly principles, devoid of partiality. If he has one or more kids, he is to once or repeatedly administer "the way to train up a child" -Prov 22:6 'Not a novice' (1Tim 3:6) has more to do with the fact that he is not a recent convert. Any man who successfully headed/handled his wife and has trained up even just one child from infancy till adolescence/maturity (when the subjection of a child becomes evident), cannot be described as a novice in people management.

Is the child bearing a mere requirement to prove that the man is virile or what?

Ans: It is not for mere display of virility. It is to be an example of a well-ruled, mature and ideal family; where ability to raise up another soul "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" has been confirmed, where the leader has provided for and fed his family (Eph 6:4, 1 Tim 5:8), etc. Hence there is some assurance that haven taken good care of his own family he may be entrusted with God's family to care for, protect from wolves and to feed with the milk and meat of the word. He that is faithful in little will be given authority over more.

Other pending questions for 'plurality of children' advocates

Matthew 19:29 *And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

1. **Do the word 'children' (Tekna) admit the singular alongside the plural in interpretation of Mt 19:29?**

2. **How did you arrive at your conclusion in 1?**

(Please explain from the context of the passage)

Eph 6: 1 "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right...*"

3. **Since inspiration uses double plural herein, is it only for two or more children in a home having both parents?**

4. **Does it exclude children with a single surviving parent or a lone child of two living parents?**

Eph 6:4 "*And, ye fathers, do not exasperate your children...*"

5. **Is the man who has only one child exempted from this command?**

A widow described as in of 1 Tim 5:4, 10.

6. **Must have given birth to two or more children before her offspring may scripturally take care of her, **True or False?****

7. **Must have raised more than one child before the church could enroll her for its continual benevolent support, **True or False?****

1 Tim 5:15 "*If **any**.. (Singular).. have **widows** (Plural), let them relieve..*"

8. **Is anyone who has just one widow permitted to relieve such?**

It is not out of place for a faithful deacon to later become an elder after many years if he desires the office and is deemed qualified.

9. **Is it his maturity and the spirituality of his family that should qualify him or an increase in the number of his children?**

Our Lord is not "Yea & Nay" and God is not the author of confusion. You assert that plurality of children is required of an elder for him to get adequate experience to manage the church while you affirm that a deacon is required to have at least one child, implying *varying* standards.

10. **Is the number of children allowed inversely proportional to 'quantity of wine each could be given to'?**

(Recall 'wine/much wine' in 1 Tim 3:3, 8)

11. **Is a deacon not required to rule his **children** and house well like an elder is also to do?**

12. **How come a deacon could acquire adequate experience with just one child to serve in the same congregation as an elder?**

On preparatory managerial experience for administering the church...

13. **If ruling over diverse children is what God really wants as you posit, is it not preferable to ordain repentant polygamists or those men who have had several children outside wedlock aside their current marriage?**

14. **To insist that an elder must have two or more faithful children is to require him to step down if he has two and one dies, **True or False?****

Conclusion

The issue is NOT whether ‘Tekna’ should be translated as ‘children’ anywhere in the New Testament. It was agreed by all that is its correct translation. *The issue is whether its interpretation and application admits the singular in 1 Tim 3:4 and Titus 1:6.* It was noted even the root Greek word one finds in these passages depends on the available Greek text since different manuscripts use either Tekna or the plural form of Teknon therein. It was established that both words could sometimes serve as synonyms.

Qualifications for an Overseer: An overseer must be one who desires the office/work and is...

1. above reproach,
2. the husband of one wife,
3. self-controlled,
4. sensible,
5. respectable,
6. hospitable,
7. an able teacher,
8. not addicted to wine,
9. not a bully but gentle,
10. not quarrelsome,
11. not greedy...
12. one who manages his own household competently (having his children under control with all dignity. If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God’s church?)
13. He must not be a new convert (or he might become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the Devil.)
14. Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the Devil’s trap.

Let's try to use verses 13 and 14 to try explain verse 4.

13: Is it “not a *convert* or not a ***new*** convert” that is required?

14: Is it someone “with *reputation*” or someone “with ***good*** reputation” that is required?

4: Is it “having *children* (quantity)” or “having ***faithful*** (quality) child(ren)” that is required?

For now, we believe that we have proved beyond reasonable doubt why the answer to the article title is ‘YES.’ We don't expect each reader or discussant to agree immediately on this or most subjects of debate. We should carefully study new views -Acts 17:11. Once that is done within a reasonable period with pending questions treated, we owe it to our individual selves to have a clear conscience on the matter that we have neither evaded nor resisted the truth. After all, **we study to be approved of God, not of man, in order to ascertain and practice the truth.** To aver that you agree a man with one child could be appointed an elder and to still refrain from doing so because you posit that would be *unsafe* for not conforming to the letter of the text, amounts to being double-minded; speaking from both sides of the mouth. It may look *safe* to keep to the letter or tradition but it would be injurious when the literal is made an excuse to obscure a truth revealed by rightly dividing the word. This is not about what is safe but about what is true and scriptural compared to what is an erroneous position. **Many congregations have been held ‘scripturally unorganized’ for years by Preachers who misinterpret the God-given criteria and/or bind conditions that the Lord never envisaged.** May the good Lord give us the courage and ability to do the needful as ministers and as members of his congregations in our era, Amen.

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