

Biblical Marriage

1. Marriage was instituted by God to represent His nature and Christ's relationship with the church; Genesis 1:26-28, 2:23-24, Ephesians 5:22-33.
2. Therefore marriage is an emotional, physical, permanent, and exclusive union between a man and a woman; Genesis 1:26-28, Ephesians 5:22-33, Revelation 19:6-9, Genesis 2:20, I Corinthians 6:13, Mark 10:6-9, Matthew 19:1-10; Romans 7:2-3; Malachi 2:14.
3. Sexual intimacy is a sign and seal of the marriage covenant and it is meant to be enjoyed only between married partners. Matthew 19:4-6; Genesis 2:24-25; Leviticus 20:10.
4. Marriage is not a sacramental union that cannot be broken; it is a moral covenant that should not, except in certain limited cases, be dissolved.
5. Believing that marriage is a sacred union which displays the goodness of God, the church recognizes and will participate in the union of an unbelieving man and woman as well as that between a believing man and woman. The church will not participate in the union of a believing person to an unbelieving person.

Divorce*

1. Divorce is always a result of sin, but it is not always sinful to initiate or grant a divorce. Matthew 19:9, I Corinthians 7:15, Exodus 21:10-11.
2. Jesus, following Old Testament Scripture, acknowledged sexual unfaithfulness as a legitimate reason for divorce. Matthew 19:9; Deuteronomy 24:1.
3. Paul introduced a second legitimate reason for divorce: when an unbelieving partner sues for divorce, the believer may grant that divorce without guilt. I Corinthians 7:15.
4. Jesus and Paul may not have intended to identify in their recorded teaching every legitimate reason for divorce. They did not discuss, for example, abuse, neglect, desertion by a believing spouse, insanity or addiction.
5. The laws regarding Hebrew servants who become wives may provide a biblical basis for granting divorce on the grounds of neglect and abuse (considered a severe form of neglect). Exodus 21:7-11.
6. On the basis of the above considerations we conclude that duly appointed church leaders may grant permission to divorce on the grounds of sexual immorality, desertion (by either an unbelieving or believing spouse), severe neglect or physical abuse (both insanity and addiction being considered under these categories). Because of the complexity and difficulty of these issues, individual judgements must be made by wise and mature church leaders on a case by case basis.
7. Divorce cannot be granted on the grounds of irreconcilable difference, severe unhappiness, belief that entering into the marriage was a mistake in the first place, or any one of the multitude of unbiblical reasons people offer to justify divorce.
8. The determination that a divorce is permissible should only be acknowledged by pastors and elders after every reasonable effort toward restoration and reconciliation has been made.

Remarriage

1. Divorces which have been pursued for legitimate reasons, when legally granted, include the right to remarry. I Corinthians 7.
2. A Christian who has experienced a divorce for any reason other than a biblically legitimate one should remain unmarried and seek reconciliation until such time as reconciliation becomes practically impossible. I Corinthians 7.
3. To divorce and remarry, except for biblical grounds, is to commit adultery. However, the second marriage, once entered into, is not to be dissolved. It becomes a legitimate marriage and the new partners are bound to each other by the same kind of covenant that bound the first couple. Remaining married, therefore, does not involve the new couple in repeated acts of adultery. Deuteronomy 24.
4. Divorce and remarriage, even when wrong, are not unforgiveable sins. With repentance to God and faithful commitment to the new spouse, a healthy Christian marriage can be experienced; and the remarried couple is free to serve and, as appropriate, lead in the Church.

***To divorce is to legally release married partners from the covenant of marriage which bound them. When the divorce is deemed biblically legitimate (and therefore acceptable to God) the partners are free to remarry.**

Approved by the Board of Elders April 23, 2016