

## A Statement from Valley Church Elders on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

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### **Introduction**

The marriage relationship between a husband and a wife is a wonderful gift of God intended to be a protective shield under which to live a blessed life and to raise children. While God has given and intends marriage to be a blessing, husbands and wives sometimes fail to experience the fullness that God intended for marriage because of the fallen nature of man. Disobedience to God can lead to divorce, unfaithfulness, abandonment, bitterness, strife, lack of love and other such things that destroy or hinder the full enjoyment of marriage. Since all of us are sinners, all our marriages in some way or another fall short of God's intention.

Because we all are imperfect creatures that share in a fallen nature, we sympathize with those who struggle in their marriages and with those who have experienced failed or failing marriages. We realize it is the grace of God that allows any marriage to thrive.

At the same time, we believe it is of the utmost importance to uphold God's high view of marriage and to encourage others to behave in accordance with this view. As God is able to save and restore any individual, we believe He is also able to save and restore any marriage. We want to communicate this hope to any who are struggling in their marriages.

Unforgiveness, bitterness, poor communication patterns, selfishness, blind spots and other enemies of marriage can sometimes be helped by mature godly Christian counsel. Ultimately, however, marital problems are symptoms of one or both marital partners walking by the flesh and not by the Spirit. We believe every marriage can be blessed when both the husband and wife are living Spirit-filled lives in obedience to the Scriptures.

With a desire that all marriages in our congregation be godly and strong, and with a heart heavy in the knowledge that not all among us who are or have been married are experiencing this blessing, we set forth this statement on marriage, divorce and remarriage.

### **Marriage**

#### What We Together Affirm About Marriage

1. God has established marriage as an exclusive, intimate, and permanent covenant relationship between one man and one woman. It is intended as a visible representation of Christ's relationship with his bride, the Church (Matt. 19:6; Eph. 5:23-24).
2. Marriage (the husband and wife being one flesh) is to last a lifetime or until the death of one of the spouses. No one is to break apart a marriage (Gen. 2:18; Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:4-6; Mal. 2:16).

3. Singleness is a state completely honored by God (1 Cor. 7).
4. What are the basic obligations for the husband? To love his wife, be faithful to her, keep her secure, provide for her bodily needs, be present, sexually expressive and never abusive (Ex. 20:14; 21:7-11; 1 Cor. 7:3; Eph. 5:25, 28-29).
5. What are the basic obligations for the wife? To encourage her husband's leadership, respect him, be faithful, supportive, present, sexually expressive and never abusive (Ex. 20:14; 21:10; Eph. 5:22, 33, 1 Cor. 7:3).

## **Divorce**

### What We Together Affirm About Divorce

1. God desires the restoration of marriage (1 Cor. 7:10-11). Thus, separated couples should work to restore their marriage and not seek divorce. Divorced couples, where both have remained unmarried, should seek to restore their original marriage.
2. A believing spouse need not contest divorce if his/her unbelieving spouse deserts the marriage, although God's will is permanence (1 Cor. 7:15).
3. We believe there are circumstances in which the Lord allows divorce. This is based on Matt. 19 and 1 Cor. 7 regarding the one who is the victim of adultery or desertion.

## **Remarriage**

### What We Together Affirm About Remarriage

1. In the event of the death of a spouse, the one who is left is free to remarry a believer (1 Tim. 5:14; 1 Cor. 7:39).
2. We believe that God permits remarriage for the one who has been the victim of adultery or desertion based on Matt. 19 and 1 Cor. 7. If remarriage occurs apart from these limited circumstances, it causes the ones in the new marriage to commit adultery (Matt. 5:31-32; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18; Mal. 2:14-15).
3. Every Christian marriage, regardless of the circumstances under which the divorce and remarriage has occurred, can be holy under God by the cleansing blood of Christ with confession of sin and committing "to death do us part" (1 John 1:9).

## Our Practice at Valley Church Regarding Those Who are Divorced and Remarried

1. We welcome into our fellowship (provided all the requirements for membership are fulfilled) every believer regardless of the candidate's marital status (e.g., single, married, divorced, remarried).
2. Any church discipline related to issues of divorce and remarriage are handled under the direction of Article IV Membership, Section 4 of the Valley Church Elder Handbook.
3. Pastors, elders and other church leaders will be requested to sanction and perform marriages for ones who have been divorced. Before a pastor, elder or other church leader of Valley Church commits to perform a marriage where one of the parties to the marriage has been divorced from a still living former spouse, the pastor, elder, or other church leader shall inform the elder board about the circumstances of the divorce and why he believes that remarriage is permitted by Scripture and within the parameters of this "Statement on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage."