



MARRIAGE | DIVORCE | REMARRIAGE

PREAMBLE

The Scripture teaches that God instituted marriage as an earthly picture of Christ's relationship with the church (Ephesians 5:22-32) and that God created marriage to be the foundation of a strong church and stable society. It was His intent that the marriage covenant should be between a man and a woman for a lifetime. God never intended for the marriage relationship to function without His involvement. As such, we believe that the most successful marriages are Christ-centered and where each spouse is submitted to God and His Word. We believe every couple needs the full measure of God's grace in their relationship, as well as training and relational encouragement, to have a successful, lifelong marriage.

MARRIAGE

God created man and saw that it was not good for him to be alone, so he took man's rib and created woman and saw that it was good. (Gen.2:1-23) Marriage is not man's design, but God's perfect design for us and the first institution created by God. (Gen: 2:22-24) Marriage is a covenant between a biological male and biological female and was designed to be a lifelong, monogamous commitment. Mark 10:6-9 says that the two shall become one flesh, so they are no longer two but one. God joins them together as an indivisible union.

Biblical marriage intentionally mirrors the sacrificial love relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. For the glory of God, husbands are commanded to act selflessly and always put their wives before themselves. Wives are to willingly submit to their husbands, thus submitting to Christ. The marriage covenant honors God's plan for us to be in a relationship with Him and in union with Christ.

Sanctification is the lifelong process of becoming more Christ-like. There are many ways for the process of sanctification to have its effect on Christ Followers, but perhaps there is no better training ground than marriage. God uses the marriage relationship to expose our flesh. In Colossians Chapter 3, we are exhorted to put to death the earthly things and to put away anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk and to put on: compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience bearing with one another, forgiving one another and putting on love which binds everything in perfect harmony. God's intention was for marriage to be a catalyst to help mature us in our faith. In Malachi 2:15, in referring to a husband and wife, scripture reveals, "Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth." Our commitment to our spouse in a covenant relationship models Jesus Christ's commitment to us.

DIVORCE

Divorce in our culture is systemic, and its effects felt throughout the church. Divorce, like many other human failures, is a consequence of sin. It was never God's intention for man and woman. In Matthew 19:8, when Jesus was asked why Moses allowed for divorce, Jesus said, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning, it was not so." Our hearts ache for those who have been affected by divorce. Grace Church is committed to helping people through the consequences of divorce through recovery workshops, support groups, and biblical counseling. However, Grace Church exists to glorify God and be faithful to his word and take seriously the exposition of divorce in scripture. Consequently, our study of scripture reveals the following:

- Divorce is only permitted if sexual sins (porneia) occur or an unbelieving spouse abandons the sacred marriage covenant.
- Pornea includes adultery and fornication (having sexual relations between unmarried men or women).
- Jesus addresses the exception of sexual immorality (porneia) as a permission for divorce (Matthew 5:32,19:9). It is not a recommendation for the faithful spouse to pursue, but an absolute final option after all avenues of forgiveness and restoration have been sought.
- Divorce is permitted when an unbelieving spouse deserts the marriage or initiates the divorce with a believing spouse.
- There is no scripture supporting two believing spouses initiating divorce with each other.
- A believing spouse should not initiate a divorce with an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). The believing spouse should always seek reconciliation and be willing to forgive the unbelieving spouse.

Some scenarios may require separation for the physical safety of a spouse and/or children in cases of physical abuse, but these situations do not justify divorce.

REMARRIAGE

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 outlines several principles around marriage. Opportunities to re-marry are very clear in cases of the death of a spouse or when an ex-spouse re-marries or when an unbelieving spouse abandons the believing spouse. In these situations, believers are free to re-marry. In all other cases, believers are encouraged to reconcile with their spouses just as Jesus Christ has reconciled us to himself. 2 Corinthians 5:18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

