

Central **MARRIAGES**

Marriage and Sexuality

Marriage Statement

We believe that marriage was established by God (Gen. 2:20-24) and the guidelines for marriage are clearly addressed in the Bible (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7). Because of Gen. 2:20-24, Matt. 19:4-6, Eph. 5:22-33, and 1 Peter 3:1-7, Central Christian Church recognizes marriage as exclusively the legal union of one man and one woman in which such union is designed by God to be a lifetime commitment.

Human Sexuality

We believe that legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage (Gen. 2:20-24; Heb. 13:4). Hence, sexual activities, such as, but not limited to, adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia, and bestiality are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the Church (1 Cor. 6:9-11,18; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; Rom. 1:26-27; Lev. 20:12-13). Further, lascivious behavior, the creation and/or distribution and/or viewing of pornography, and efforts to alter one's gender are incompatible with the biblical witness (Matt. 5:27-30; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Divorce and Remarriage

The Covenant of Marriage

Marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God.¹ It is a covenant relationship whereby God joins one man and one woman together as one flesh, consummated in sexual union, and ensuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership. We believe that marriage illustrates Christ's covenant with his church, therefore the husband is called to faithfully love his wife as Christ loves the church and the wife is called to respond to her husband's loving leadership as the church responds to Christ (Eph. 5:18-33).

Divorce

Although marriage is a gracious gift from God, and designed by Him to last a lifetime, we believe it is still subject to the curse of the fall. God hates divorce. He hates it because it always involves unfaithfulness to the solemn covenant of marriage that two partners have entered into before Him, and because it brings harmful consequences to those partners and their children. (Mal. 2:14-16).²

We believe that God can and does heal and restore even the worst of marriages, therefore we never counsel divorce. Even in the case of marital unfaithfulness. Infidelity in a marriage is a big deal. It violates the covenant that the husband and wife make before God...*"forsaking all others,*

¹ Kostenberger, Andreas J.. God, Marriage, and Family (Second Edition): Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation (Kindle Location 1353). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

² Divorce and Remarriage. Gracechurch.org

Central **MARRIAGES**

to cling only to each other... "It corrupts the "oneness" that a husband and his wife are called to. And while the Bible may allow for divorce in the case of sexual immorality (Matthew 5:32, 19:9), the greater and higher call is to forgiveness and reconciliation. We believe that God wants to restore broken marriages...but both must be willing to walk that long and difficult road together. That begins with repentance and a real brokenness over our sinfulness and selfishness.

Remarriage

Remarriage is permitted for the faithful partner only when the divorce was on biblical grounds. Those who divorce on any other grounds have sinned against God and their partners, and for them to marry another is an act of "adultery" (Mark 10:11-12). Remarriage after unbiblical divorce should only be considered if reconciliation is not possible (i.e. former spouse remarries, is an unbeliever, or dies).

Repentance and Forgiveness

In cases where a believer obtained a divorce on unbiblical grounds and remarried, he or she is guilty of the sin of adultery until that sin is confessed (Mark 10:11-12). If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Therefore the believer should strive from that point forward to continue in his or her current marriage to the glory of God.

Abuse

Counseling in Cases of Abuse

In situations of abuse it is important to remember that safety always comes first. We also have a responsibility to minister to both the abused and the abuser. Here are three questions to consider when navigating these situations.

- 1. Should I counsel separation?** – In cases where people are at risk of harm it is wise to suggest a time of separation. Separation does not equal divorce, but it does allow the distance needed to get out of a harmful situation and begin addressing the issues.
- 2. Should I report this to the authorities?** – The answer to this question is usually yes. If children are involved it is especially important to call the authorities right away, including Child Protective Services.
- 3. Do I have a plan to move forward?** – Cases of abuse are always messy. It is important to inform the right people and then begin working on a plan for healing and restoration. This is a time to invite people to go deeper into our ministry as opposed to pushing them away.