

A Position Statement on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage from the Pastors of Apex Baptist Church¹

“Haven’t you read,” Jesus replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”
Matthew 19:4-6

Introduction

The purpose of this position statement is to provide a guide from the pastors of Apex Baptist Church to our congregation, staff, and leaders regarding the covenant of marriage as provided by God’s Word. We recognize that the Bible is the very word of the living God to us, His people, essential for teaching, correcting, and training Christians in sound doctrine and godly living (2 Timothy 3:16-17); we also understand the importance of both knowing and obeying biblical truths (Gal 6:7-8). For this reason, we are deeply committed to studying, teaching, and living the Scriptures (Ezra 7:10). Because of the divine origin of marriage as well as the devastating effects of divorce, we are likewise devoted to preserving marriages and preventing divorce.

In today’s culture, divorce is unfortunately not uncommon. Some have experienced divorce prior to Christ, others are divorced through no desire or choice of their own; still others may have separated because of their own wrongful decisions, but are now recipients of the forgiveness, grace, and the empowerment of God offered through our Lord Jesus (Eph 2:17-18). For some it is the kindness of God that may lead us to call them to repentance, and to encourage and aid marital reconciliation whenever possible (Rom 2:4, 12:17-18). Regardless, everyone is welcome at Apex Baptist Church.

With regards to divorce and remarriage among Christians, we realize that there are differing interpretations of Scripture by others who are equally committed to the authority of God’s Word.² While we have considered the most prevailing interpretations of Scripture in this area and have found positions of agreement, we realize that no pastor can be asked to conduct a wedding ceremony against their conscience (Rom 14). This position statement on marriage, divorce, and remarriage presents the agreed-upon minimum standard taken by the pastors of Apex Baptist Church.

¹ In 2009, those pastors involved in writing and agreeing upon this statement were senior pastor Phil Qualls and the pastors that serve with him; viz., Alex Cosio, Peter Dubbelman, Tim Shaw, Nathan Stam, and Chuck Thompson. At this time, it also was fully supported and endorsed by the 2009 deacon body.

² Though biblical scholars earnestly differ from one another on what, if any, situation would permit a divorce and remarriage to occur, all agree that God designed marriage to last a lifetime. They also equally agree that sin is the destroyer of marriages and that there is no such thing in God’s eyes as a “no fault” divorce. Four major positions on divorce and remarriage are held within evangelical Christianity: (1) Divorce and Remarriage for Adultery and Desertion; (2) Divorce, No Remarriage for Adultery and Desertion; (3) No Divorce, No Remarriage for Adultery; Divorce but No Remarriage for Desertion; (4) No Divorce, No Remarriage for Adultery and Divorce, Remarriage for Desertion. Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage and Family* (Wheaton: Crossway Books: 2004), 256. Two of our pastors hold to a more conservative position than presented here. But see the below Application section point 1: Guidance for Pastors.

It is our prayer that marriages would be entered into with a commitment for life, and that they would stay healthy and fruitful as husbands and wives follow after the Lord and His lifestyle laid for us in the Word. We also pray that divorce within our church would cease and that the sanctity of marriage would capture the hearts of church members to the point that they would pray for and encourage one another to pursue healthy, growing marital relationships.

The church is a fellowship of forgiven believers who have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light; nevertheless, their lifestyles, including their marriages, should ideally act as "salt" and "light" to the world around them, causing people to be attracted to God (1 Peter 2:9-12; Col 1:10-14; 3:7-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-19; Matt 5:13-16). It is shameful that God's people come to the Church to be married and then go to the world's courts to get divorced at about the same frequency as non-Christians (Eph 1:11-12). If anyone finds him/herself in a difficult marriage or is considering divorce or remarriage, we ask that he/she meet with us (Heb 13:17; Pro 2:1-6). We are always accessible to pray for you, fight for your best interests, and bring the counsel of Scripture to you for your well-being and God's honor (James 5:13-16).

Marriage

Marriage is a sacred relationship created by God for humanity (Gen 2:21-24; Mal 2:14-16), the first institution designed by God, and a life-long, covenant relationship between one woman and one man (Gen 2:23-24; Mal 2:14; Pro 2:16-17). Resultantly, we believe that marriage involves sacred vows, taken before God and His people—more than a sentimental agreement or an interpersonal contract. Marriage is so special that the two become "one flesh" in a spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship (Mat 19:5; Mark 10:8). In marriage, God gives a wife to a husband and a husband to a wife; they are to receive one another as God's unique and personal provision to complement each other. We believe that marriage is also a crucible for sanctification, whereby God teaches us to love one another more than ourselves and in doing so become more like Christ (Pro 27:17; Phil 2:1-11).³ God additionally puts a man and woman together and calls them for His purposes and glory. Loving God and one's neighbor nicely sums up God's heart for his children (Matt 22:34-40). Within the marriage context, this means unconditionally loving one's spouse, which at times is done without hope of return or in a setting where one's spouse is undeserving of love (Rom 12:17-21). In essence, God asks both the husband wife to be his loving hands, mouth, etc. to either his son or daughter.

What makes marriage one of the greatest of all human institutions is that it brings together what contemporary life seems so often to split apart—sex, love, companionship, fidelity—and makes of them something greater than the sum of their parts. Far from being outmoded, marriage is made for today. Contemporary culture often displays life without commitment or a twisted perspective of marriage. In such settings, people and things are frequently discarded when they are either hurtful or perceived as useless. As a result, children and spouses are hurt over and over when a husband or wife disregards the interests and well-being of other family members. A worst case scenario of this dynamic all too often culminates in divorce. Christian couples, however, whose marriages should honor God, must have a different point of view. In humility, they should consider others better than themselves and not only look out for their own interests but also the interests of others (Rom 15:2-3; Phi 2:3-11); this is especially true for spouses with children (1 Cor 7:14). Not only are our hearts concerned when we see those we love living in the midst of strained marriages, but they grieve deeply when children,

³ Gary Thomas's book, *Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy*, is an excellent source on this very topic.

minus the redemptive power of God, are damaged for life by the hurts incurred by an unhealthy marriage and/or a subsequent divorce.

A Christian marriage involves various fundamental assumptions.⁴ For example, it is essential that each spouse realize that unless their Christianity works at home, it is worth very little elsewhere. As a result, each partner should endeavor not to have merely a good marriage, but an excellent one! Though there are many helpful marriage books,⁵ the key to a successful marriage is two spouses who are continuously following hard after the Lord. Should spouses become parents, their most important ministry as a couple will be living godly lives before their children and discipling them.

Marriage itself is a picture of the relationship between God and His people (Eph 5:25, 32; Isa 54:5; Hos 2:14-23; Jer 3:20). Therefore, we believe that the divine paradigm for the marriage covenant is God's covenant with His people; one that is distinguished by an unyielding faithful love, an obstinate commitment that governs this bond, and never-ending grace. Just as the Trinity reflects equal worth with differing roles, God created a man and a woman with equal worth but with differing roles and responsibilities in marriage (Gen 1:27-28; 2:18-24; Eph 5:21-6:4, 1 Pe 3:1-7). The marital relationship is the foundation of the family unit, a key element in the local church, and a cornerstone in civilizations. Because of the significance and uniqueness of this marriage relationship, God commands that a believer should not marry an unbeliever (1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-15; Mal 2:10-12; cf. Neh 10:30). Marriage is also a God-ordained vehicle for blessing and change in the lives of the marriage partners and a vehicle of ministry and blessing to the world that should bring glory to God. This, however, does not mean that staying in an unmarried state is falling short of God's best (1 Cor 7:32-35; Matt 19:11-12).

Couple Seeking Marriage

Each couple seeking to be married at Apex Baptist must receive premarital counseling either by one of our pastors or counseling equivalent in content and nature. In order for the Christian meaning of marriage to be conveyed, our pre-marital counseling sessions are typically six to seven weeks in duration. These sessions are in addition to one or more meetings with the pastor doing the wedding ceremony to discuss the events for the wedding day. Should the couple seeking marriage want a pastor other than one of us to perform their ceremony within our sanctuary, this pastor should first be approved.

As pastors, we believe that one day we will stand accountable for the care of God's sheep (Heb 13:17); unfortunately, couples seeking marriage are often tempted to look for a pastor to marry them as one would search for a banquet hall or ask a bridesmaid to be in their wedding. Potential newlyweds should instead approach the pastor, whom they desire to marry them, seeking to hear counsel and wisdom in

⁴ Several good books that elaborate on this topic are: *Boundaries in Marriage* by Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend; *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs* by Emerson Eggerichs; *The Marriage Builder* by Larry Crabb.

⁵ E.g., *The Five Love Languages* and *Five Languages of Apology*, both by Gary Chapman; *Money In Marriage Workbook* by Larry Burkett. *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong* by Leslie Vernick; *The Four Seasons of Marriage* by Gary Chapman; *The Second Half of Marriage* by David and Claudia Arp.

regards to their desire to get married:⁶ Does their desired union please the Lord? What must we do to have a marriage that will not only go the distance, but also thrive?

The pastor being requested to oversee the wedding service may decide not to marry the couple, if in the pastor's sole discretion sufficient grounds exist. The Bible teaches "fidelity in marriage, celibacy in singleness" (1 Cor 6:18; Gal 5:19; Matt 5:27-32). If the couple to be married is living together at the time of the wedding request, they must repent and pledge to separate physically and remain sexually pure until the wedding date in order to remain eligible for wedding services at our church (1 Cor 6:12-20). Physical separation means living in different homes, not remaining under the same roof. The couple will be given a few weeks after meeting with the pastor to acquire separate housing.

What about Divorce?

Given the above perspective on marriage, it is not surprising that the Bible consistently warns against divorce. The prophet Malachi cites God's hatred of divorce (Mal. 2:13-16); Jesus commands that no one separate that which God has joined together (Mark 10:2-12); and Paul's high view of marriage is reflected by his counsel that a believing spouse must not separate from an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:10-14), despite his prohibition against marrying unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). Contrary to our "divorce on demand" culture, when you search the Scriptures for encouraging declarations about divorce, you just cannot find them.

We believe that the most God-honoring and joy-giving outcome of a struggling marriage is its restoration to what God intended it to be. We also are persuaded that God can soften any hard heart and restore broken marriages to all who will obey and trust Him (Psalms 51:10; 71:20; Matt 17:20). We have seen numerous situations in which God has miraculously restored a marriage to a beauty greater than it had previously experienced. Unfortunately, many Christians quickly abandon this hope, fail to stand on God's promises found in Scripture, and fail to seek His help or the prayers of His people and leaders (James 5:13-16). Nonetheless, our steadfast conviction is to labor for and encourage the restoration of marriages that are struggling. We desire to shepherd our families through all stages of marriage—the good and the difficult. Should someone find him/herself in the midst of marriage difficulty or are considering divorce or remarriage, we ask that he/she meet with us and seek our counsel and prayers (James 5:13-16; Heb 13:17).

At times, when there is much hurt and pain in a marriage, we may initially even counsel temporary separation for the hopeful purpose of healing and reconciliation (Hos 2:14-23; Mat 18:21-35). As people of the resurrection, though we would never counsel spouses or their children to put themselves into a potentially dangerous or abusive situation, we believe that God can resurrect dying or dead marriages (Rom 4:17; Eph 1:18-20), and we are desirous of working with any spouse hoping to see that happen.

What Is Permissible?

The critical questions with regards to divorce should be, "What would most please and honor our God?" and "What decision would most clearly declare the Gospel to those around us?" rather than "What is permissible?"

⁶ A primer on this subject would be: *101 Questions to Ask Before You Get Engaged* by H. Norman Wright.

Though God's children are encouraged to guard their hearts above all else (Pro 4:18) and warned that each person will stand accountable for his choices (Heb 13:4; 2 Cor 5:10), in recognition of man's weakness and sinfulness, God mercifully permits divorce in certain situations. This is not because He wills it but because of the hardness of people's hearts (Deut 24:1-4; Matt 19:3-9; 1 Cor 7:15). We believe, however, that these exceptions are not meant as automatic reasons for divorce. Divorce is only permitted (never commanded) in cases of fornication or abandonment (Matt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:11, 15). Fornication covers a wide variety of sexual activity including adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and incest (Matt 5:32, 19:9, 1 Cor 5:1).

Abandonment occurs when a non-believing spouse decides to leave his or her existing marriage relationship with a Christian (1 Cor 7:12-15). If Paul would allow divorce under such circumstances, some may wrongly feel that the opposite is also true; i.e., if one is a Christian and his/her spouse is not, he/she may or should divorce the unbelieving spouse. Having an unbelieving spouse is not, however, a cause for divorce but rather an occasion for the unbeliever to be saved; not as much by the believing spouse's preaching but rather this spouse living the gospel before them (1 Pet 3:1-7; 1 Cor 7:12-16; John 1:12). Paul also did not permit divorce on the grounds of incompatibility or people "falling out of love." The believer is to do everything possible to make the marriage work and only permit a divorce to happen should an "unbelieving" spouse make divorce unavoidable (1 Cor 7:10-27).

Persistent physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of a spouse is similar to abandonment. God has provided protection for an abused spouse through the church, civil authority, godly counselors, prayer, and other practical measures. Reasonable steps should be taken to provide for protection of the abused spouse while promoting appropriate reconciliation and restoration. While such situations can be very emotional and difficult, we are committed to work redemptively and biblically with couples and with the assistance of Christian counselors to help break cycles of unhealthy behavior that wage war against a marriage. Our goal is to promote biblical habits and lifestyles that will contribute to the restoration and health of the individuals involved and, if possible, also the marriage.

Remarriage

Though remarriage can be biblical, Paul encourages those not married, for whatever reason, to not make marriage their main pursuit (1 Cor 7:27-28). Instead, a person's ultimate priority, as it is for all believers, must be living for the purposes and glory of God (7:29-35), which of course may mean marriage. Remarriage is biblical if at least one of the following three circumstances has occurred: the death of a spouse, a divorce involving biblical grounds, or a disloyal spouse.

1. *Death of a Spouse:* Marriage after a spouse has passed away is clearly permissible, since death breaks the marriage bond (Rom 7:2-3); however, a time period of healing between interment and remarriage is strongly advised. This season of pause is helpful in order to avoid rebound relationships, to allow for children to adjust, and to permit the surviving spouse to become emotionally stable (Eccl 3:1-8).
2. *Divorce involving Biblical Grounds:* As stated earlier, there are biblical grounds by which God allows divorce. In such cases, both partners have scriptural freedom to remarry; however, remarriage is morally permissible but not commanded. If a new marriage is to take place, the spouse(s) from a former marriage should confess all known sin surrounding the divorce and should have made significant progress in overcoming any destructive behaviors and attitudes that may still persist from

the first marriage. We further urge all those considering remarriage after a divorce to commit significant time to prayer and the study of God's Word, along with seeking appropriate godly counsel.

3. *A Disloyal Spouse*: When a divorce is unbiblical, remarriage is considered adultery and the person who marries someone who has been divorced on unbiblical grounds also commits adultery (Matt 5:32; Matt 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom 7:1-3). It is adultery because God does not recognize the validity of an unbiblical divorce and subsequent remarriage. The spouse who leaves his or her marriage under unbiblical grounds should remain unmarried or repent, be reconciled to God and restored to the faithful spouse (1 Cor 7:9-11, 1 John 1:9). Further, should a spouse leave his or her marriage, the 'remaining' spouse should also remain unmarried and be open to restoration of the marriage. However, if while under the aforementioned circumstances either spouse pursues either an unbiblical divorce and subsequent remarriage or commits actions giving biblical grounds for a divorce, either spouse is free to remarry (1 Cor 7:27-28).

Jesus' disciples felt that the above words of this section were difficult to hear (Matt 19:10); they are no less challenging today (but see below section, *Called to Be Separate, Different*). But, in the midst of a warning to the believer that the marriage bed should be kept pure and that God will judge the adulterer, believers are encouraged that God will never forsake them and will help them in every and any situation (Heb 13:4-6). God will give such people, who should remain unmarried, the ability to live a life of singleness (1 Cor 7:1-40; 10:13; 1 John 3:21-22; 5:3-5).

Sometimes there are circumstances under which a person may have been divorced for an unbiblical reason and is now remarried; e.g., a first divorce and subsequent remarriage could have taken place prior to salvation. The Bible gives general prescriptions for people who have been divorced and remarried under unbiblical circumstances: any marriage between a man and a woman has significant standing in God's eyes (Mal 2:14-15); vows made before God are to be fulfilled (Eccl 5:1-7); a person should remain in the marital state they were in when they got saved (1 Cor 7:17-24). Therefore, Christians who have been divorced for unbiblical reasons and are now remarried should acknowledge that their choice to divorce and the act of entering a second marriage was wrong; they should also confess their error in the appropriate context and seek forgiveness. They should not, however, attempt to restore their first marriage after entering a second union, nor should they attempt to live as a single person (1 Cor 7:10-11; Jer 3:1). An expression of genuine repentance for the sins involved in the divorce and remarriage is all that is needed to make both this marriage and the persons involved to be in right standing before God and therefore members in good standing with our church (1 John 1:9; Titus 3:3-8). When appropriate, reasonable and responsible financial support or other resources should be provided by an unfaithful spouse to an unmarried spouse and children of the prior marriage (Pro 3:27; Heb 6:10; Gal 6:10).

Called to Be Separate, Different

To the best of our ability, as those called to equip God's people with sound doctrine (Eph 4:11-16), we believe marriage to be defined as outlined herein and the above causes to be the only grounds for divorce and remarriage. We also acknowledge that though many marriages are capable of birthing pain in the hearts of family members, in divorce there are typically no winners but rather increased pain. In the midst of doing many other things, we are here to fight for the spouses of our church, their marriages, and their children. Both Jesus and Paul charged the leaders of the church to be aware that "savage wolves" desire to destroy lives (Acts 20:29; John 10:10). Since God refers to the Church as a

family (Gal 6:10; Eph 3:15; 1 Tim 3:4-5), it seems reasonable that if the families of our church are healthy our church will be blessed for it. Aware that the stakes are high and ever mindful that only God's grace can make the difference in people's lives, we are humbly and soberly compelled to watch over those committed to our care, stand against those who would distort the truths presented herein, and act as a friend and counselor to spouses wrestling with God's direction for their lives/marriages and the children caught in the process (Acts 20:25-35).

We realize that many of the above words may be hard to hear; however, Jesus calls his followers, whether they are pastors or parishioners, to a life of radical love and forgiveness, a life that is separate and different from those who do not believe in God (1 Pe 1:13-2:12; Luke 6:27-42; 17:3-4; Eph 2:19-22; Phil 3:20). On the one hand, there is a temptation to tone down Jesus' words (Matt 5:19); but, there is also an admonition to God's leaders to join His process of making people lie down in green pastures and leading them in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Obviously, this must be done with skillfulness of hand and integrity of heart (Psa 23:2-3; Matt 5:19-20; 1 Pe 5:1-4; Psa 78:70-72).

Salvation, which is by grace not works, involves a recognition of Jesus' lordship over one's life (Eph 2:1-10; Rom 10:9-10); therefore, unlike Tetzl did in Luther's day,⁷ we are not to preach an act or a "sinner's prayer" as an easy ticket to heaven. Though Jesus assures the believer of his/her security (John 10:28, 29; cf. Rom 8:31-29), He also encourages those who follow Him to a life of total commitment (Luke 14:15-27, 33), to an awareness that even God's people will reap what they sow (Matt 7:24-27; cf. Gal 6:7-9), and to an understanding that Christians are called to fruitful living (John 15:1-26; cf. Rom 6:1-8:39). Resultantly, Jesus challenges those deciding to follow Him to seriously consider their choice (Luke 14:28-32). Fortunately, by God's grace, a way of life and hope is available to every believer, for God recreates His followers with a new heart (Heb 8:7-12; Luke 15:24); they are able to see things differently than before their surrender to God (John 3:1-15; 2 Cor 4:4-6); God's grace is available to teach them to be passionate about pleasing Him by their lifestyles (Titus 2:11-15; 2 Cor 5:9-21); God's Spirit is there to enable every Christian (Rom 8:9-11) to live wisely instead of foolishly (Eph 5:15-18); and God has promised to establish all those who call out to him in their time of need (Heb 4:12-16) so that they may fulfill their calling to be "salt" and "light" to a decaying and darkening world (Matt 5:13-16).

Disciples are to be taught to diligently and compassionately obey everything that Jesus commanded (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 15:58; Heb 6:10; 1 Tim 3:13). With regards to the words written herein, this does not mean, for example, that God calls a faithful spouse to a life of abuse. Forgiveness from the faithful spouse only properly proceeds from the unfaithful spouse bearing fruits of repentance (Matt 3:8). Nor does it mean that God expects His people to never sin (1 John 1:8-10); instead, He calls them to acknowledge their shortcomings and passionately desire to follow His commands rather than the world's patterns (1 John 1:3-6; 2:15-17). A walk of obedience also does not mean that the "letter of the law" is to be dictated and enforced blindly and coldly by God's leaders.

Since leadership is unavoidably a dynamic that involves both authority and influence, it easily and wrongly can become an exercise of control and abuse; when this happens, the process starts imposing harm on both the leader and those led. We realize that when people get involved in religious manipulation and coercion they often choose "freedom" over being associated with any type of authority. Unfortunately, this "freedom" is very short lived. True, sustained freedom is normally

⁷ Johann Tetzl (1465-1519), when raising money for St. Peter's Basilica is remembered for selling indulgences (remission of punishment due to sins) and saying, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

experienced when people are properly connected to the body of Christ, for God has lovingly given His people pastors who are not called to lord their positions over people's faith, but rather to guide them, protect them, and work with them for their joy and well being (Acts 2:42; Heb 10: 23-25; 2 Cor 1:24; 1 Peter 5:3). We desire to do just that, and we ask that those we serve would diligently pray for us that we might faithfully and efficaciously carry out our responsibilities (Heb 13:18; Col 4:2-3; Rom 15:30; 2 Cor 1:11).

Application

1. *Guidance for Pastors*: No one in leadership can be asked to act against his conscience (Rom. 14); therefore, each pastor should teach, counsel, and perform marriages according to their personal conviction, with this statement providing a minimum standard. Based on the pastor's conscience and interpretation of God's Word, a more conservative or restrictive position than is stated herein may be taken.

2. *Expectation of Church Members*: Apex Baptist is here to serve every marriage between a husband and a wife (Pro 20:23; Gal 3:26-29). Furthermore, though divorce is not without major consequences (see above thoughts), it is not the unpardonable sin, nor should those who have suffered from its effects be treated as outcasts (John 8:1-11). Those coming into our local assembly as divorcees or as products of divorce should be cared for lovingly and with an understanding that God's heart is always redemptive in nature (Gal 6:1-5; Rom 5:8; 8:31-39).

3. *Expectations of Those Seeking Church Membership*: Should it be discovered that a remarried couple whose divorce and remarriage was not biblical is pursuing membership at Apex Baptist Church, a church pastor will encourage both parties to seek God's perspective (as outlined above), forgiveness, and healing, if they have not already done so. This issue should be resolved prior to the couple becoming church members (2 Cor. 5:6-12).

4. *Holding Church Leadership Positions While Experiencing Marital Difficulty*: While most marriages experience difficulty and conflict from time to time, it is the expectation that those with healthy marriages will work proactively to address the issues causing the problem. When marriage difficulties continue or escalate into divisive, destructive activity, it may be appropriate to ask church leaders to step down from their positions of service in order to focus their attention and efforts on restoration and healing of their marriage relationship. This should not be viewed as a punitive measure but rather as our desire to uphold a strong value of marriage and family, a strong realization that a spouse's first ministry outside of God is his or her family, and a realization that ministry outside the home is only effective and proper if the home is in order (Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Prov 24:3). In this context, church leadership positions include any position of responsibility or service where there is visibility, decision making, a significant amount of time away from home, or responsibility for ministry; e.g., pastor, deacon, life group teacher, usher, children's worker, music ministry member, greeter.

Conclusion

The marriage commitment must be honored and upheld in our culture as God's sacred institution in which a man and a woman, together, can experience the truest sense of spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy: two becoming one flesh. Marriage is the cornerstone of the family unit. The function of a family flows naturally from a healthy marriage whose purpose is to honor God by

forming the spiritual, emotional, physical, and economic foundation for individuals, the Church, and any society.

We stand for the joy and well being of our congregation and want God to be glorified in all that we do and say. We desire, as the Lord leads, to lovingly and humbly act as “shepherds of God’s flock under our care.” This includes those married in our midst, those divorced, and those who have pursued or are pursuing divorce or remarriage, regardless of their reasons. Some may find our marital stance counter-cultural and resultantly unacceptable; nevertheless, we are called by God to teach and model such things (1 Tim 4:11-16). We, and those set apart as deacons, are here to serve our congregation, with our marriages being held as first examples (1 Tim 3:4-5; 12). We are committed to stand firm to protect and defend the sanctity of marriage through our prayers, teachings, training, encouragement, support, and counsel (1 Tim 3:4-5; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:25-38; John 13:1-17; Gal 6:1-2).

For this reason, we kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and earth derives its name. We pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen the marriages of our church (Eph 3:14-15); may they be fruitful and multiply, may they be healthy and whole (Gen 1:28); may our church be known as a place where people hear a godly perspective on marriage and married couples may find refuge, healing, support, and training; may our families shine as stars of hope in our communities, bringing praise to our Father (Phil 2:14-16; Matt 5:16). May our children go forth with joy and peace with God, called as oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor (Isa 55:12; 61:3); and may those we serve at Apex Baptist Church have a similar heart.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in our church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Eph 3:20-21).